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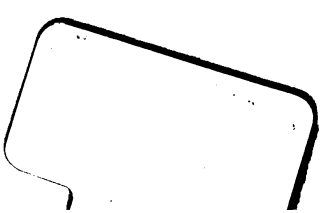

THE

CHRISTIAN VILLAGER'S GUIDE BOOK.

A MANUAL OF

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS,

POINTING OUT

The Way to a Holy and Happy Life.

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO THE VILLAGE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY

ANTHONY CROWDY, A.M.

AUTHOR OF "CHURCH OF ENGLAND VILLAGE DIALOGUES."

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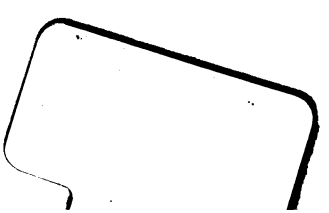

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author is glad of the occasion afforded him by this reprint of the Christian Villager's Guide-Book, to record his thankfulness for the manner in which it has been received, and the extent to which it has been circulated. During the many years which have elapsed since its publication, even down to the present time, he has been favoured with most gratifying communications from Clergymen, District Visitors, and others, (many of them strangers to himself personally,) expressive of their own estimate of the work, and bearing testimony to its *great* acceptableness amongst that class of our population for whom it was written.

The First Edition comprised 2000 copies, and has for some years been out of print. It was, however, got up in a more expensive form than was originally designed, and its cost was necessarily such as to constitute an obstruction to its general circulation in rural parishes.

In preparing the present Edition, comprising also 2000 copies, the greatest care has been taken to pro-

vide for its being published at the *lowest possible price.* Nothing more has been sought, or can be gained, in a pecuniary way, than what is just sufficient to meet necessary expenses, and reimburse the Publishers.

It is hoped, therefore, that those who take an interest in the families of Christian villagers, in domestic servants, and the labouring classes generally, may be disposed to make this little manual known among them, and to recommend it as a volume suitable for Parish Libraries, and for the Catalogue of Book-hawking Associations.

The *style* in which the book is written was adopted advisedly, and is advisedly retained. It is a form of language, as many believe, that comes with more force to a peasant's ear, and is likely, therefore, to make a stronger impression on his mind.

And now the Author would commend his humble work to the gracious acceptance of the Divine Head of the Church; devoutly praying that, under His blessing, it may help and encourage many to keep the paths of righteousness, and "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."

DEDICATION.

TO THE VILLAGE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

To you I dedicate this little volume, because it much concerns you. I have taken some pains in writing it: but I shall never regret this if you will give your best attention in reading it. You will find I have discoursed about those subjects with which, as Villagers, you are familiar; and which closely relate to your eternal welfare. I have endeavoured to point out to you your particular temptations, and to direct you in your particular duties. My aim has been, to teach you to *adorn* the gospel as well as

profess it; and to put you in the way to be happy by shewing you how to become holy.

I have not told you of *every* duty of a Christian man, nor of everything that *belongs* to the duties which I have written upon; but I have told you what I thought was most needful and most profitable. In this respect I have acted as, you know, guides do. They point out the right road where it is *puzzling*, and they warn where it is *dangerous*. Where all is smooth, straight, and plain, the guide has no occasion to give directions.

I have also dwelt upon some matters which in other times might not have been so important; but they are of great importance *now*. Religion is widely professed; but, if we are to judge of it by its fruits, much of it is of a very doubtful character. Pride, conceitedness, self-will, and a spirit that tramples upon all order, neither acknowledging the authority of the ministers

of Christ, nor respecting those distinctions of rank and station which God himself has appointed,—these are very commonly the accompaniments of the religion professed in this day, whether in towns or villages. But, my friends, this is *not* the religion of Jesus Christ. These turbulent waters are not the softly flowing waters of the sanctuary. I would put you on your guard against such a religion as this, by whatever name it is called, or by whomsoever it is professed.

In reading the "Guide Book," let me beg you to take notice of such words and sentences as are printed in a *different letter* from the others. Your eye will soon observe them if you read carefully; and you will find such a distinction useful, because often the chief point or main strength of what is said lies in these words. If it is one word so printed, you should mark the *meaning* of that word particularly; and if

it is a whole sentence, you are thereby desired to give it SPECIAL CONSIDERATION, and to lay it up in your mind for future use.

Above all, you must pay particular attention to all the *texts* that are referred to, whether at the head or in the body of each chapter. Look them all out, and learn them. They are the words of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, and of all saving knowledge. From them, in common with other Scriptures, I have learned the things which I have endeavoured to teach you. If they abide in you, and you make them the subject of prayer, you will find there is not only divine *light* but also divine *life* in them. God will bless them, so that they shall help to *make* you that holy character, that "manner of persons," which they tell you you *ought* to be.

And now I ask you, frequently to pray the blessed God, that He would be pleased

to use this little book as an instrument of good to poor sinners—that He would make it helpful to many, to lead them through a life of grace into a life of glory. And as often as any one of you may derive benefit from it, whether it be an increase of divine knowledge, or conscientious principle, or zeal, or love, or faith, or penitence, or grace of any kind, remember to acknowledge God as the giver of that good; and, at the same time, put up a prayer for the unworthy Author, that he may find mercy of the Lord in the great day.

I remain,
Your affectionate Friend and Servant,
In the bonds of the Gospel,
And in the ministry of Jesus Christ,

ANTHONY CROWDY.

October 1838.

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SOME FIRST WORDS.

"FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES: IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD, NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST."—EPH. II. 8, 9.

"WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING: FOR IT IS GOD WHICH WORKETH IN YOU, BOTH TO WILL AND TO DO OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE."—PHIL. II. 12, 13.

CHRISTIAN Villager, if thou art entitled to that holy and blessed name, thou hast these foundation truths of religion laid deep in thy mind:—That thou art not thine own, but *God's*, because he created thee; not thine own, but *Christ's*, because he redeemed thee; not thine own, but the *Holy Ghost's*, because he quickened thee into spiritual life, dwelleth in thee as his temple, and is thy teacher, comforter, and sanctifier, according to the gospel covenant. Thus, then, *thou belongest to the Holy Trinity;* and with the Holy Trinity, that

is, with the three persons in one Godhead, thou must have constant dealing in the concerns of thy precious soul. Thou must always approach God the Father by God the Son, and through the inward grace of God the Holy Ghost.

But further. Thou art well persuaded that thou art indebted to *free grace* alone, first and last, for all that thou art, or ever hopest to be, as a Christian,—that it was *free grace* which first enlightened thee, *free grace* which drew thee to Jesus by a living faith, *free grace* which broke thy heart into repentance, and *free grace* which shed abroad in it the love and peace of God.

Further still. Thou acknowledgest, that nothing but free grace can *carry on* and *complete* the work which free grace hath begun,—that thou hast only God in Christ to look to for direction, support, and preservation,—that in thyself thou art guilty, empty, corrupt, and helpless,—but that *free grace* hath given thee, in thy Saviour, pardon for thy guilt, fulness for thy emptiness, strength for thy weakness, and sanctification for thy corruption.

Yet further. Thou art sensible that, not-

withstanding thou art saved by *free grace* alone, God hath so ordered the way of salvation that thou art not to sit still, and be acted upon like a dead machine; for though much hath been done *for* thee, there is still much to be done *in* thee. Thou knowest that thou art to be up and doing, "giving all possible diligence to make thy calling and election sure."[1] Thou art to *seek*, and *follow on*, and *strive*,—thou art to *run*, and *wrestle*, and *fight*,—thou art to *watch*, and *pray*, and *meditate*. The light of thy grace is to *shine*, the doctrines of thy Saviour are to be *adorned*, thy Father which is in heaven is to be *glorified*, and thou art to follow thy Master, day by day, wherever he leads thee, carrying thy appointed cross in faith, and patience, and love. Thus thou art diligently to use all the means of grace, that thou mayest "grow up into Christ in all things."[2] And when his image is perfected in thee, and thy work is done, thou art to be removed up to that better country, for which thou hast been thus teaching and training down in this wilderness-world.

Finally. Thou art prepared to testify, that

[1] 2 Pet. i. 5–10. [2] Eph. iv. 15.

religion is not so much a thing for the head to know, as it is *a state for the heart to be in*,—that a man, in that state, will think, and feel, and act according to it in all things, and at all times, and in all places,—that no man can be a Christian to-day and not one to-morrow, religious in the morning and not religious at noon, a saint on Sundays and a worldling all the week. Thou maintainest that Christianity, when planted in the soul, is nothing less than another and a better *nature*,—that a Christian man is therefore a *new* man, that he is "created anew in Christ Jesus,"[1] possesses within him a new spirit, and "walks daily in newness of life."[2] These are the main articles of thy gospel-creed. Thou believest that thou hast got the authority of God's Word for all of them, and, therefore, thou wilt not consent to give the name of true Christianity to any religion which comes short of this.

Well, then, Christian Villager, if thou standest upon the foundation of these truths I can talk with thee as with one who will understand me, and we can walk together because we are agreed. If, therefore, thou hast a mind

[1] Eph. ii. 10. [2] Rom. vi. 4.

to accept of my guidance, I will promise to lead thee honestly, and, to the best of my knowledge, scripturally. By the blessing of God, I may give thee a few hints which may help thee forward on thy pilgrimage. I purpose taking *Truth* and *Love* along with us as companions. For without *Truth* I would not attempt to move a step with thee, and if *Love* be of the party, we shall lose nothing of *Truth's* instructions, while *Love* will make the conversation all the pleasanter. What I ask of thee is, to be sincere, serious, and teachable; and let us both pray for a blessing on what is said.

ABOUT LIVING TO GOD.

"FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND TO HIM, ARE ALL THINGS."—ROM. XI. 36.

"——— HE DIED FOR ALL, THAT THEY WHICH LIVE SHOULD NOT HENCEFORTH LIVE UNTO THEMSELVES, BUT UNTO HIM WHICH DIED FOR THEM, AND ROSE AGAIN.' —2 COR. V. 15.

"FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST."—PHIL. I. 21.

"THE LORD IS THE PORTION OF MINE INHERITANCE AND OF MY CUP."—PSA. XVI. 5.

"THE LORD IS MY PORTION, SAITH MY SOUL, THEREFORE WILL I HOPE IN HIM."—LAM. III. 24.

"WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT THEE? AND THERE IS NONE UPON EARTH THAT I DESIRE BESIDE THEE."—PSA. LXXIII. 25.

As a child of God, Christian Villager, thou art possessed of promises and privileges marvellously great and endearing. And they are intended to be more than helps and comforts for thee in this present life. They are also *pledges* and *foretastes* of that blessed communion with God which thou shalt enjoy fully in heaven,

and they are *means* and *preparatives* to fit thee for it. The more thou exercisest thyself in learning and using them, the holier thou wilt grow and the happier thou wilt live.

Now, among these privileges, let me call thy attention to two, which stand first in importance and in value. One is, that thou art to *live devotedly to God;* the other, that thou mayest *take God for thy portion.*

As a Christian, then, thou art to live devotedly to God. It matters not that this was always thy bounden duty, for in thy natural state thou hadst neither will nor power for it. Thou art indebted, for thy ability to fulfil it, to Him to whom thou art indebted for every other spiritual good; and He procured it for thee upon the cross. It is, therefore, a gospel-purchase; and though, as I have said, it was always thy duty as a *creature*, and doubly so as a *redeemed sinner*, it is also a glorious privilege, —a privilege which the very chief of the archangels is proud to share with thee. In this thou art to differ from unconverted men and devils. The devils live to themselves and to sin. Unconverted men live also to themselves, and to sin, the world, and the wicked one.

Thou knowest this by thy own sad experience. But when the Holy Spirit came to thee in the preaching of the gospel, and "turned thee from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," thou wert then free to will and free to act. Thou wert privileged to give thyself to God, through Christ, with all the powers of thy body and soul, to be His, His only, and His for ever,—to obey, serve, and glorify Him with all affectionate devotedness of heart and life. Upon this privilege I shall not say further, than that the more thou knowest of it by *exercising* it, the more thou wilt bless thy Saviour for restoring it to thee among the benefits of redemption.

But next. Thou art privileged, as a Christian, to take God for thy portion,—to have Him as thy God. What He said to Abraham and the children of Israel, He saith unto every one of his people, "I will be a God unto thee."[1] When, therefore, thou canst truly say with the weeping church in the "Lamentations," "the Lord is my portion,"[2] and with holy David, "Thou art my God,"[3] thou canst say all that is possible to be said by any created

[1] Gen. xvii. 7; Exod. vi. 7. [2] Lam. iii. 24.
[3] Psa. xxxi. 14.

being. With God for thy portion, thou canst not in reality want for anything. Thou hast more than all creation put together. Thou hast the Creator himself, the all-sufficient God! Consider that title,—the all-sufficient God! If thou seemest to *lack* anything, it is but thine own self-deception,—the acting of unbelief in thy soul. For hast thou not God? And if thou hast Him, I do not say what more wouldst thou, but what more *couldst* thou have? Oh! in this privilege, fully understood and made thine own, thou hast something to be present with thee and support thee in every possible circumstance of life, and condition of body or soul. In darkness, in weakness, in sickness, in pain, in sorrow, in difficulty, in poverty, in evil treatment, in all sorts and degrees and multiplications of evil, thou hast still the blessed and unchangeable God for thy portion! Seen or unseen, at hand or afar off, He is still thine,—thine to make thee happy in the possession of Himself, His comforts and joys, amidst all thy sufferings and bereavements!—and thine, to preserve thee safe through all to that great day when thou shalt see Him as he is, and, though not *possess* Him more, *know* and *enjoy* Him better!

I shall now proceed to drop thee a word or two of Christian counsel, which, if thou art disposed to follow it, may, through grace, much help in this matter of living devotedly to God.

Take thee for one of thy daily guides the following Scripture precept: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding."[1] Whatever quickness of parts or soundness of judgment the Lord may have bestowed upon thee, thou art still but a fool without Him. However wisely thou mayest plan and skilfully execute, according to the wisdom and skill of this world, it lieth with God at last to make thy work prosper. In all things, therefore, which thou takest in hand, or which come to pass unto thee, put thy whole heart's trust in Him who is the great Governor of the world,—thy covenant God in Christ. Thou art prayerfully to use the means, and to leave the issue with Him. It is His business to manage, it is thine to trust. If thou "commit thy way unto Him, He will surely bring it to pass."[2] And this precept is not to make thee slothful,

[1] Prov. iii. 5. [2] Psa. xxxvii. 5.

but the contrary. God is one that loves *diligence*, and gives his promises to the *diligent*. Thou art, therefore, to combine the two,—to be *as active in thy duties, as though it lay with thee to do everything; and yet to be perfectly empty of self-dependence, as one who can do nothing at all without God.* Neither must thou fret or despond when things seem all going wrong with thee. For that which seems wrong to thee, may easily be right to God; and it is when thou canst not see His hand, or trace His end, that thou honourest Him most, and servest thyself best, by *trusting* Him.

I shall now recommend thee another precept, which is a good companion to the one we have been talking of, and, indeed, stands next to it in the book of God, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him."[1] Seek God's direction in everything thou undertakest, and then His support in the performance of it. *Make His glory thy end, love to Him thy motive, and His grace in Christ thy means.* Take heed that thou engagest not in anything on which thou canst not, unhesitatingly, ask his blessing; and remember that, while nothing in the

[1] Prov. iii. 6.

way of duty is too great for thee to attempt in Christ's strength, so nothing is so insignificant but it may be done unto God. This doctrine may be foolishness to the natural man, but it is heavenly wisdom and gospel-privilege to thee.

If, therefore, thou takest this precept for thy rule, thou shalt have the promise which is joined to it for thy comfort,—"And He shall direct thy paths." Now, God will find means of doing this for thee constantly, and one great means will be His Word. Thou art taught by the Psalmist to pray, "Order my steps in thy Word."[1] By that word, then, by all its various teaching, thou shalt be led on. It will tell thee, for the most part, what to do, when to be doing it, and how to do it. Be thou only careful to *search out* the instructions of this Word, that God may have full opportunity of teaching thee. For if thou search not the Word, thou art as one who keeps his own light shut up,—thou art *getting out of the way of God's grace, instead of putting thyself, as much as possible, in it.* And if thou wilt not study the book which is used in God's school, thou

[1] Psa. cxix. 133.

canst scarcely expect He will devise some other plan of instruction to suit thy humour or encourage thy idleness. Nay, it is not unlikely, thou mayest have to learn at last in bitter sorrow what thou mightest have learnt at first with ease and pleasantness.

But thou hast another promise very suitable to thy purpose here, "I will guide thee with mine eye."[1] This may be taken to mean the eye of God's *providence*. Thou readest some extraordinary things in Scripture about the effect of the Lord's *looks* upon men. That was no common look with which He "looked upon Gideon, and said, 'Go in this thy might,' . . . have not I sent thee?"[2] Thou knowest what a champion Gideon went forth, in the might of that look from God. Again, thou readest, in another place, how "the Lord *looked* through the pillar of fire and cloud unto the host of the Egyptians,"[3] and thereby troubled the whole army, as they pursued his people. Now this was a look of a very different kind from the other; and thou seest what lightning power it carried with it, to terrify the enemies of the Lord. But the looks which I am speaking of

[1] Psa. xxxii. 8. [2] Judges vi. 14. [3] Exod. xiv. 24.

are looks from the *providence-eye* of God; which thou wilt do well carefully to observe. For, as the eye of a mother is both direction and encouragement to her little child when he first begins to walk, so shall this eye of God, in His providence, direct and encourage thee. With this eye God can look thee this way, or look thee that way—look thee forward, or look thee back again—look a smile upon thee, or look a frown. Prayer and practice will make thee skilful, in time, in interpreting these looks of God. In an *opening* providence thou mayest see His eye looking *approbation* upon thee, and bidding thee enter upon that path: and in a *shutting up* providence thou mayest discern a look of *disapprobation*, which bids thee stop, and not attempt to proceed in that direction. And thus thou shalt be led through this wilderness-world, as safely as was Israel of old by the pillar of fire and cloud. *Thou* wilt have an eye to follow which others see not, and know nothing of. Thou wilt live, and walk, as in the presence of God; and every daily providence will lead thee into fresh communion with Him.

And finally, for the help of thy faith, thou will do well to meditate upon some of those

Scriptures, wherein God speaks so graciously about the *guidance* of his people. Hear Him appeal to thee as He did to Judah of old, "Wilt thou not, from this time, cry unto me, my father, thou art the guide of my youth?"[1] Hear Him again say, and that with such sweet condescension, that it is hard to believe it is the great God who speaks, "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms."[2] And again, remember how He exclaims, "Behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths:"[3] thus turning his wayward and self-willed children from their mischosen paths, by providences that are like walls to stop, and like hedges of thorns to pierce. In all this thou seest not only how *ready* the Lord is to be thy Guide, but *what* a Guide thou hast in Him. Oh! let me counsel thee to *put thyself, every fresh morning of thy life, by a solemn act of faith, into the hands of thy God;* and there lie still and be happy. And when thou art called upon to move, go forward, leaning upon those everlasting arms, and never trust thyself away from them. He will "carry thee, as a nursing

[1] Jer. iii. 4. [2] Hos. xi. 3. [3] Hos. ii. 6.

father, even to hoar hairs"[1]—He will "comfort thee as one whom his mother comforteth"[2]—He will "cover thee in the shadow of his hand"[3]—He will provide for thee, and fight thy battles.

Christian Villager! thou must needs *love* such a God as this. Love Him *reverently*. He is God. *Creature-love* must be tempered with *creature-fear:* and there is a *Gospel-fear* of God, which hath so little of bondage in it, that it may well be called a *love-fear*. This is the fear of His children. It is a fear which is jealous for His honour, and cannot bear to have it slighted in any way. It is also a fear that dreads *displeasing* or *grieving* Him by sin, far more than it dreads *punishment*. It is the fear of the *forgiven* prodigal, when he was once more an inmate of his father's house—a fear that would do any thing, or bear any thing, rather than vex that father's heart, or risk the losing of that father's love. "In *this* fear of the Lord there is strong *confidence*;"[4] and "happy is the man that *thus* feareth alway."[5]

[1] Isa. xlvi. 4. [2] Isa. lxvi. 13. [3] Isa. li. 16.
[4] Prov. xiv. 26. [5] Prov. xxviii. 14.

ABOUT RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION AND BEHAVIOUR.

"WHO IS A WISE MAN, AND ENDUED WITH KNOWLEDGE AMONG YOU? LET HIM SHEW OUT OF A GOOD CONVERSATION HIS WORKS WITH MEEKNESS OF WISDOM."—JAMES III. 13.

"LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE AS IT BECOMETH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST."—PHIL. I. 27.

"WHO MAKETH THEE TO DIFFER FROM ANOTHER? AND WHAT HAST THOU THAT THOU DIDST NOT RECEIVE?"—1 COR. IV. 7.

"KNOWLEDGE PUFFETH UP, BUT CHARITY EDIFIETH. AND IF ANY MAN THINK THAT HE KNOWETH ANY THING, HE KNOWETH NOTHING YET AS HE OUGHT TO KNOW."—1 COR. VIII. 1, 2.

"A PRATING FOOL SHALL FALL.—PROV. X. 8, 10.

AN ill name hath often been brought upon religion by the very persons who profess it, in consequence of their adopting certain ways of talking and acting, which neither belong to the gospel, nor become it. Thou wilt find, it is true, that the greater number of such as

practise these things have more of the *form* than of the *power* of godliness : but, unhappily, the mischief which they do does not end with themselves. For they not only give occasion to those who are glad to have occasion to speak against religion, but they draw aside into their foolish and hurtful ways some of the sincere ones of Christ's flock ; some who have not experience or caution enough to beware of their example. And thus it comes to pass, that the world and the church both suffer ; for the one is hardened, and the other is weakened by these practices.

Thou wilt probably be saying to thyself, Christian Villager, on hearing the above, that this is one of the devices of the enemy. Thou art right—it is so. Satan's policy is always to do as much mischief as he can. Where God has planted wheat, he sows tares—where a good cause is prospering, he brings an evil report upon it—and if he cannot succeed (which, thank God ! he cannot), in *slaying* the pilgrims of Zion, he will spare no pains, early and late, to lead them astray, or to cripple them.

I call upon thee, therefore, to ponder well what I have to say to thee about these things.

Lay up the following warnings and maxims in thy mind; and carry them into practice, as often as thou goest forth among thy neighbours and acquaintances, or hast any dealings with thy fellow-men. I believe thou wilt bear witness to their being needful and sound, the more thou puttest them to the proof by observation and experience.

First. Be more anxious to *be* a Christian than to pass for one. "Esteem others better than thyself."[1] "Keep thy own vineyard, thy own heart diligently."[2] Thou hast plenty to do there, and wilt find, in that occupation, enough to humble thee every passing hour.

Again. Beware of being a religious *talker*. This leads to vanity, hypocrisy, and a hardened state. When thou talkest on religious subjects, "let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God."[3] Consider that He is always by thee, and knows thee thoroughly: and when thou namest His name, do it reverently. There be many whose practice it is to be constantly uttering that holy name, whether suitable or not. They will be saying on every occasion, "bless the Lord;" and, "thank the

[1] Phil. ii. 3. [2] Prov. iv. 23. [3] Eccles. v. 2.

Lord;" and, "with the blessing of God;" and such like, when, it is manifest, they are either not thinking of God at all, or certainly not with the reverence which is due to Him. But, believe me, *this is "taking the Lord's name in vain."*

Again. There be many who are very fond of babbling out portions of the Sacred Scriptures in their talk, one text after another, without order and without sense. And too often they seem to do this from no other motive than to make a show of their knowledge of Scripture, and to get the praise of man. But mark me, *this is profaning the Lord's Word.* This is much the same sort of sin as that which Belshazzar was guilty of when, in his pride, he brought out and made a show of the sacred vessels which had been taken from the Lord's temple at Jerusalem. Thou rememberest that dreadful hand which forthwith made its appearance on the wall, and what it wrote, and how all was accomplished.[1] It will be well if these triflers with the Lord's holy Word are not also "*weighed in the balances and found wanting.*"

[1] Read Dan. v.

Again. Thou wilt find it no uncommon thing to hear certain religious professors talk of their guilt and corruption, with a face of *indifference* that will amaze and shock thee. The aim of such persons seems to be, to let thee know how well they are acquainted with the Scripture account of the wickedness of man's heart, and how deeply they are convinced of sin themselves. But, oh ! Christian Villager, *light* tongue never yet spake the feelings of *heavy* heart. That stream is seldom deep which carries much noise and bubble upon its surface : and that conscience, which is said to be sore wounded but yet *feels* not, must be nigh unto mortification and death. It is well, indeed, that we should all be convinced, and it is sometimes, no doubt, seasonable that we should express to others, how guilty we are before God, and how much we experience of indwelling sin. And I would not be the man to lead thee to suppose that thou couldst find any language in the world big enough or strong enough to tell out all thy guilt and all thy corruption—there is nothing which can do this but Gethsemane and the Cross. But I hold, that the character of true gospel penitence is

always, more or less, the same. A heart pierced with convictions by the Holy Spirit is a heart bruised, and broken, and crushed. Grief, and shame, and self-abhorrence, accompany its recollections of its wickedness.[1] And the possessor of that heart is more disposed to go apart with his God, and pour out his sorrows and his sins to Him, than he is to make a show of them, unnecessarily, before the face of man. A glimpse at the penitents of Scripture, at a time when a sense of sin was upon their soul, will best shew thee *what* it is *truly* to feel sin and its sinfulness. Job "abhors himself;"[2] Isaiah is "undone;"[3] David is "not able to look up;"[4] and Peter "goes out and weeps bitterly,"[5] when no eye but that which looked him into penitence could behold his tears.

Again. Beware of a habit of *ascribing all the evil workings of thy heart to the Devil.* Thou wilt find many professing Christians too apt to be doing this;—continually saying, "Satan has been very busy with me in this way, or in that," and so forth. Now, no doubt "that wicked one" is far too busy with us all, and it

[1] Read Lam. iii. [2] Job xlii. 6. [3] Isa. vi. 5.
[4] Psa. xl. 12. [5] Luke xxii. 61, 62.

is needful to be ever on the watch against him. But, oftentimes, we are *our own Satans*, and act his part with ourselves; and there is quite enough of this *Satanism* within us to move us to all manner of wickedness. The misfortune, therefore, of the above-named habit is, that when everything is thus laid to the tempter, the soul is likely to become gradually overrun with its own corruptions. For there is not that watchfulness against indwelling sin, nor that self-abasement on account of it, which the true Christian should never lose; neither are those means, which are so mercifully given to cleanse and purify, used half so earnestly as they would be, if such persons would begin to charge Satan less and themselves more. I just bid thee mark here, how true it is that "the heart is *deceitful* above all things, as well as desperately wicked."[1]

Once more. See that thou get not some *favourite doctrine*, and put it, as it were, *in the room of Christ;* fixing thy mind more upon it than upon Him, and making it a standard to measure thy fellow-Christians by. There is a class of persons much given to this. They are

[1] Jer. xvii. 9.

ready talkers and disputers. They are anxious to know if thou pronouncest Shibboleth as they pronounce it. They are more concerned about the question, *whether thou holdest their particular doctrine, than whether thou art a man of true godliness.* But theirs is an unhappy case. They make an idol of a doctrine, and they suffer the consequences of such idolatry. Thou wilt often see, in their state, how *a stuffed head and a lean soul can well stand together.* If thou wouldst shun a conceited, meddlesome, and judging spirit, avoid the company of such persons.

Finally. Christian Villager, do thou follow thy dear Master, and no one else, excepting so far as they follow Him. Make it thy one thing to look well to the daily improvement of thine own soul. The foundation-doctrines of the gospel, as they are set forth in the articles, homilies, and liturgy of the Church of England, thou canst not indeed prize too dearly. Hold them fast, even unto death; yea, in death and beyond death. And pray the Holy Spirit, constantly pray to Him, to lead thee into *all* truth, *in order that thou mayest be perfected in all grace.* Join these two together, as the

means and the *end*, and thou wilt get thy prayers richly answered; for the blessed God is as much interested in thy sanctification as thou art. Yes, Christian Villager, follow thy dear Master. Breathe his affectionate and gentle spirit to all around thee, copy his plain and simple manners, practise his sober and edifying discourse, deny thyself with his cheerfulness, bear and forbear with his patience, walk in his humility, and give thyself up, as He did, in faith and love to thy God and Father, to spend and be spent for his glory, and for the benefit of a dying world.

ABOUT READING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AND RELIGIOUS BOOKS.

"IT IS WRITTEN, MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD."—MATT. IV. 4, also DEUT. VIII. 3.

"LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM."—COL. III. 16.

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES."—JOHN V. 39.

"AS NEW-BORN BABES, DESIRE THE SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD, THAT YE MAY GROW THEREBY."—1 PET. II. 2.

"THY WORD IS A LAMP UNTO MY FEET AND A LIGHT UNTO MY PATH."—PSA. CXIX. 105.

"HIS DELIGHT [THE BLESSED MAN'S] IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD: AND IN HIS LAW DOTH HE MEDITATE DAY AND NIGHT."—PSA. I. 2.

THERE is but one book *appointed* to teach and sanctify the soul, and that is the Holy Bible. All communion with God, all enjoyment and benefit of ordinances, all right performance of duty, depend on the degree in which this blessed book is known and used. Thy spiritual

concerns will flourish or decline, according as thou art diligent, or the contrary, in searching and applying its contents. I will tell thee what is thy state in the inner man, when thou hast told me how often thou and thy Bible hold converse together. *A dusty Bible shews a sloven soul.* Thou wilt not get that book to do much work in thy heart unless thou hast it frequently in thy hand.

I would counsel thee, therefore, to read through the Scriptures from beginning to end regularly. This will insure thy becoming acquainted, more or less, with them all. Thus, thou mayest not only hope to be instructed in all manner of righteousness, but thou wilt not have to go before God with the guilt of having *neglected any part of the good Word which He took the pains to send thee.*

And be not dismayed because thou canst not *understand* everything which thou readest there. *Difficulties* are thy heavenly Father's means of trying thy faith, and exercising thy humility: and it is good for thee to know but in part, until thou canst bear to know all without being puffed up by it. Besides, the sea of divine truth hath its shallows as well as its

depths; and thou wilt find plenty of such waters as thou canst easily *wade* in, as well as many in which thou must swim. And if thou art *indeed* a disciple of Christ, thou art a regular scholar in his school, and hast a promise of thy Master's on this very subject. Thou knowest the good Spirit is his appointed teacher; and He undertakes to lead thee into *all* truth. As long, therefore, as thou readest sincerely and simply for thy edification, the Spirit will shed light upon the Word, at least sufficient for thy purposes; and thou mayest confidently expect, if thou goest steadily on under his teaching, that He will open thine eyes more and more to see the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, in proportion as thou art able to bear them. And thus the Word will be to thee as a telescope, by which thou mayest look into heaven. For, as the astronomer puts one glass on to another, to bring the stars, as it were, closer to his eye, so mayest thou join one bright truth of Scripture to another, to bring the glorious God nearer and nearer to thy view. And it is this manner of beholding the Holy One in his Word, that *beautifies* as well as delights the soul. As the Apostle saith,

thou wilt be "changed into the same image from glory to glory,"[1] by the inward work of the Lord's Spirit, who uses the Word of Truth for this blessed purpose.

Again. Get thee, if thou art able, a Bible with marginal references; that is, a Bible which has some texts, from other chapters, marked by the side of the verses in every chapter. These will be useful to thee for many purposes. In them thou wilt find the great truths of redemption set forth in many different ways, and to many different persons, and at many different times; but all shewing that it hath been but one and the same blessed gospel from the foundation of the world. And when thou comest upon any *difficulty* in thy reading, if thou lookest out the texts in the margin, thou wilt often get light enough to see thy way out of it; for this is thy Father's mode of exercising thy *diligence* in the study of his precious book.

Again. Put a mark by the *hard places* which thou meetest with, and *consult thy minister about them*, and talk them over with thy brother-learners in the school of Christ. The Lord

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

often communicates to one what He withholds from another, that He may make the members of his Church helpful to each other; and thus He encourages holy and pleasant communion among them. For it is with them as it is with the members of the natural body. The hand hath need of the guidance of the eye, and the eye, in its turn, is glad of the service of the hand, and both occasionally want the feet, and the feet them. Moreover, when thou seekest knowledge or counsel at the lips of thy minister, thou art honouring the ordinance of God.[1] For if the Lord hath given him the tongue of the learned, and made him "skilful in the Word of righteousness," it is *for thy sake* more than his own: and thou art never so sure of obtaining for thyself gospel-helps, as when thou art seeking them in a gospel-manner.

Lastly. Take care that thou openest that book with *humility* and *prayer*. Upon the *frame of mind* in which thou readest thy edification much depends. Give thyself up, as a little child, to the Holy Spirit's teaching. Whatever heavenly light thou art possessed of,

[1] Mal. ii. 7.

acknowledge it all as a gift from God: and, in the midst of thy highest attainments in grace and knowledge, remember, that *in thyself* thou still hast nothing and art nothing. Thou knowest how Moses was bidden to sprinkle the book of the law with some of the blood of the sacrifices.[1] That book was sprinkled and sanctified with blood, to teach the Israelite and thee, that, without bloodshedding, thou couldst have nothing to do with God, nor He with thee in the way of mercy; for the law demanded, and still demands, perfect obedience or death. It was to teach thee also, that thou art indebted to this same bloodshedding for grace to understand, love, or keep the holy law in any degree, thyself. Then carry this thought with thee to the book of the gospel—to the whole Bible. Remember that it is sprinkled with blood! and what blood? not the blood of bulls and of goats, but the precious blood of God thy Saviour! Endeavour to keep this in thy mind over every verse, and thou wilt seldom lack the right spirit in reading.

And now, one word about *religious books*. Be not surprised if I tell thee, *I would not have thee too fond of reading them*. Some will no

[1] Heb. ix. 19.

doubt be useful to thee, as they will probably help thee to draw better out of the well of Scripture; but remember, *they are not the Word.* The enemy of souls hath a device here. He knows the grace and power of the Word, and will try to lure thee from it by such baits as religious books. Be thou, therefore, upon thy guard. Abana and Pharpar were very good and useful rivers in their place; but they were not "the waters of Israel" which the Lord had blessed. Thou must plunge thy spirit deep into the Jordan of God's Word, if thou wouldst be made clean.[1]

Then take this little rule to govern thy reading by. If religious books *do not lead thee, with increased desire, to the one great book,* they are not doing thee good but harm. Thou hadst better, at least for a while, let them alone. The subtle serpent is creeping round thee in them; and his aim is, to spoil thy spiritual relish and appetite, by tempting thee with food which is not sent down from heaven. Depend on it, thou wilt be able to bear the "strong meat" of the Word of God only so long as thou *usest thyself to it* from day to day.

[1] See John xv. 3, and Psa. cxix. 9.

THE LORD'S DAY.

"REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY."—EXOD. XX. 8.

"IF THOU TURN AWAY THY FOOT FROM THE SABBATH, FROM DOING THY PLEASURE ON MY HOLY DAY: AND CALL THE SABBATH A DELIGHT, THE HOLY OF THE LORD, HONOURABLE: AND SHALT HONOUR HIM, NOT DOING THINE OWN WAYS, NOR FINDING THINE OWN PLEASURE, NOR SPEAKING THINE OWN WORDS: THEN SHALT THOU DELIGHT THYSELF IN THE LORD: AND I WILL CAUSE THEE TO RIDE UPON THE HIGH PLACES OF THE EARTH, AND FEED THEE WITH THE HERITAGE OF JACOB THY FATHER: FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT."—ISA. LVIII. 13, 14.

"AND UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, WHEN THE DISCIPLES CAME TOGETHER TO BREAK BREAD, PAUL PREACHED UNTO THEM."—ACTS XX. 7.

"I WAS IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD'S DAY."—REV. I. 10.

"YE BRING MORE WRATH UPON ISRAEL BY PROFANING THE SABBATH."—NEH. XIII. 18.

THOU art bound to hallow this day, *because* it is the Lord's Day—thy Lord's Day—the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. If thou dost not respect this law, thou dost not respect the authority of

the great Lawgiver. If thou hallowest not this day, thou dost not hallow the holy name of God. A transgression of the commandment of the Sabbath is doubly sinful, because God hath set his special mark upon it. It was his first institution for the good of man. He appointed it at the beginning of the world. He sanctified it by his own rest after the six days' work of creation. And in after ages, when He brought the Israelites out of Egypt under Moses, and formed them into a church and people for himself, with his own hand, upon one of the tables of stone, He wrote the law of the Sabbath, beginning it with the word REMEMBER.[1] The human race had, in their wicked departure from God, forgotten this as well as every other truth and ordinance of religion; and God in mercy revived it. And when our crucified Lord rose from the dead, and thus completed his great work of redemption, and rested from it, as God did from his work of creation, He saw good to have, (mark me,) not the *law* of the Sabbath, but the *day* of the Sabbath, changed. He came to his disciples, as thou knowest, on the evening of the *first* day of that week, when they were assembled,

[1] Compare Exod. xx. 8, and xxxii. 15, 16.

and pronounced his blessing upon them.[1] Upon the *first* day of the week also the glorious descent of the Holy Ghost took place, when the disciples were again all met together.[2] And from that time they evidently used to assemble for divine worship on the first day of the week; making that day the *Christian* Sabbath, and distinguishing it from the old Sabbath by the name of "the Lord's Day."[3] This is the history of the change in the blessed Sabbath: and for these reasons all Christians have in all ages united in keeping holy the *first* day of the week instead of the seventh. Thou seest, therefore, plainly that this is a day of no small account with God. It is a *great* or *high* day in every respect. It was solemnly, *very* solemnly instituted by the *great* God. It brings *great* things to remembrance; nothing less than creation and redemption. It comes laden with *great* privileges. Divine communion with the blessed God, and with his whole Church, may on this day be especially enjoyed. As the day of public preaching and ordinances, it is a day of *great* work among

[1] John xx. 19. [2] Acts ii. 1.
[3] Acts xx. 7, also Rev. i. 10.

human souls. *Great* grace is poured out—*great* victories over sin are gained—*great* refreshments are distributed to the living, and *great* resurrections accomplished upon the dead. It is also a *great* type of heaven—of the *employment* and the *rest* of heaven. And it is not only a *type*, but a *pledge*. It stands up amid the rolling years of time, and, though sufferings and sorrows still fill the guilty earth, and try the righteous as well as the wicked, it comfortably proclaims as often as it comes round, "there remaineth a rest for the people of God."[1]

Further. God hath spoken very much about this day in his Word. Great are the *blessings* which He promises to them that keep it: great the *punishments* which He threatens to them that break it. Probably thou art little sensible how much in religion is connected with the Sabbath. Let me put down for thy use some things which God has said concerning it; and do thou compare them together, and well consider them.[2] Thou wilt

[1] Heb. iv. 9.

[2] Turn to Isa. lvi. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7. These texts chiefly refer to persons not under the Jewish law, and to Gospel times. So also does Isa. lviii. 13, 14. We learn from them, that there was always intended to be a Christian as

see by these Scriptures, and by the testimony of all religious history, that, as a due observance of this holy day advances men and nations in the grace of God, so, a neglect or low opinion of the day sinks them, more than any thing else, into a graceless and wicked state. The value and enjoyment of this day is a sign of the soul's health and soundness, as much as an appetite for food is a sign of the health of the body. If *this* be well, generally speaking, all is well; but if *this* be ill, all is ill, or very soon will be.

But now, Christian Villager, thou wilt not be without temptations upon this holy day. For, though the Lord be the rightful master of *all* our time, and hath so solemnly chosen a seventh part for Himself, writing upon it as it were, "this is to be mine, I claim this portion, see thou give me this;" and though this is done all for man's own benefit and happiness, and not for God's,—there are yet multitudes to be found, who dare to deny the God of

well as a Jewish Sabbath, and we see how much account the Lord makes of the duty of keeping it. Read also Neh. xiii. 17, 18; Jer. xvii from 21 to 27, and Ezek. xx. 12, 13. 16, 20, 21, 24. Here, "They polluted my Sabbaths," is repeated four times.

eternity his claim, and rob him of his one day in seven. Satan, as thou wouldst expect, is specially busy in working mischief among men this day. It is too *good* a day, its *benefits* to God's people are too great, for him to let it pass without attempts to spoil it. He hath, therefore, his different snares for different characters, and some of all kinds fall into them. Accordingly, many are the ways, and many the degrees of Sabbath profanation. There is, first, the large class of Sabbath-breakers, who outrage the law both of God and man, this day by their public scandals. Then there is another class—composed of Sabbath-idlers, Sabbath-gossipers from house to house, Sabbath-visit payers, Sabbath readers of newspapers, and Sabbath-talkers,—nay, often transactors of worldly business. Many of these are *half* Sabbath-keepers, who, because they go *once* in the day to the Lord's house, persuade themselves that all is well. Yet how do they shew by this very conduct, that they neither *love* the Sabbath, nor *fear* the Sabbath's God. For who that *truly* loved the Sabbath, and knew its value, would give up, as these persons do, one half of its sacred privileges? or who that *really* feared the Sabbath's Lord, would presume to interfere with his

solemn law concerning it, and say, in deeds if not in words, "I will not give thee more than half thy day?"

And lastly, there is a class of *formal* Sabbath keepers, who go farther than these others. They regularly attend public worship, and abstain from outward worldly practices. They have certain books which, on this day, they always read, and not unfrequently they assemble their families for some act of religious duty. But still the day is *dull* and *tedious* to them. They have no *relish* for the sacred services, there is no *life* in their devotions, they have no notion of *communion* with God. They go through their round of formalities, and Monday finds them all alive and ready for the world again.

Against all these evil examples, then, Christian Villager, I would carefully put thee on thy guard. Example is apt to take effect upon us before we are sensible of it, if we do not watch against it. Learn thou to *love* the Sabbath-day—to "call it a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable."[1] Spend the whole day upon the mount with God. Let thy soul *rest* in him. Employ thyself in meditating upon

[1] Isa. lviii. 13.

the glory and beauty of his character, as it is manifested in Jesus Christ, and in the plan and work of Redemption. Rest in his *love*—rest in his *promises*—rest in his *faithfulness*. In a word, *rest in God himself*, as thy portion, thy world, thy life, thy happiness. This is the lesson of lessons, and this is the day of days to learn it in.

And see that those who belong to thee keep the day likewise. Bid thy good wife get her household cares all over, if possible, on the day before, so that thou mayest have a quiet Saturday eve of preparation for the day of rest. The less there is of a temporal kind to occupy her or thee on this day, the better.——Send thy little ones duly to the Sunday School, from whence, thou knowest, they will be conducted to the house of God. There meet them, thou and their mother together, and, if possible, both morning and afternoon. But if necessity at any time compels *one* to be at home, then manage that *each* shall have, at least, *one* oppportunity of going before the Lord in his sanctuary for a supply of grace. Very few are the occasions in which the wife of a villager cannot go *once* on the Sabbath to public worship, and *she is no Christian mother, who makes the care of her family an excuse for the neglect of her God.*

Avoid, as much as thou canst, Sunday visitings with thy kinsfolk. But when it happens that thou art with them, or they with thee, on this day, do not let this be the means of robbing God of his rights, or thee of thy privileges. Wait upon Him in his house, that thou mayst have Him with thee in thine. *It is sad when communion with kindred, cuts off communion with God. And far from happy must be those meetings, which endanger a final meeting in a better world.*

Lastly. Speak a word for God to those who profane the Sabbath among thy neighbours. Jealousy for his Lord's honour, and compassion for self-destroying sinners, are two master-feelings in a Christian's heart. Especially do thy little endeavour to put a stop to those sinful pastimes, which now so much disgrace the villages of England. Tell the misguided lads, who will thus tempt the wrath of God, that the day will come, when *they will wish their arm had been withered before ever it touched bat or ball.* Warn them, kindly, of the dreadful truth, *that the price of these Sabbath cricketings is like to be nothing less than a lost soul!* Who knows but the Lord may bless thy word, to snatch one or more of these brands from the everlasting burnings?

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

"MINE HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED AN HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE."—ISA. LVI. 7.

"IN ALL PLACES WHERE I RECORD MY NAME I WILL COME UNTO THEE, AND I WILL BLESS THEE."—EXOD. XX. 24.

"FOR WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER IN MY NAME, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM."—MATT. XVIII. 20.

"ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING, AND INTO HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE."—PSA. C. 4.

"NOT FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER, AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS."—HEB. X. 25.

"BLESSED ARE THEY THAT DWELL IN THY HOUSE."—PSA. LXXXIV. 4.

"A DAY IN THY COURTS IS BETTER THAN A THOUSAND."—PSA. LXXXIV. 10.

WHEN thy soul is alive unto God, its spiritual life must be maintained by the ordinances of the Gospel, or means of grace. Thou must in no wise neglect attending upon these, any more than thou must neglect taking nourishment for

thy poor perishable body; for, the health of thy soul will certainly depend on the steady supply of its appointed food. I am not, however, going to discourse with thee here at large upon the *benefits* of Public Worship. Thou mayest acquaint thyself with them, and with the way of enjoying them according to the Church of England services, elsewhere.[1] But I would wish to make thee sensible both of the privileges and of the necessity of this ordinance, and to forewarn thee of such temptations as thou art likely to meet with in attending to it.

"The Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."[2] And why? Surely He loved the dwellings of true Israelites all over the land, even though they were but mud-built cottages? Yes, but He loved Zion best, because there was his *temple*, and there his *ordinances*. And these He valued, because, by their means, his people were fitted for living with Him in the heavenly Zion. In his house below He prepared them, as He does his people now, for his house above. There He met them with Gospel blessings. There, by his preached

[1] See "Church of England Village Dialogues,"—Dialogue iv.

[2] Psa. lxxxvii. 2.

Word, He talked to their hearts, and disposed their hearts to talk with Him. There He heard their troubles, there He healed their sicknesses, there He wrote out their pardons, there He loosened their chains, and there He wiped away their tears. Thou readest, concerning God, that his "way is in the sanctuary."[1] To the sanctuary, therefore, He takes his people, that they may learn and understand his way. Again—thou readest, that "strength and beauty are in his sanctuary."[2] There, accordingly, He assembles his chosen, that they may put on his strength, and be made beautiful in the image of his own holiness. Thou knowest, what fond recollections of these days in the sanctuary the son of Jesse had, when he was an exile in the wilderness. Thou shouldst study the 63d Psalm, that thou mayest catch the same spirit of burning love to God, and the same delight in sanctuary privileges. Thou wilt then better enter into the deep meaning of his holy soul, when he desired this one thing;—"to dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple."[3] Yes, Christian Villager, if thou knowest by experi-

[1] Psa. lxxvii. 13. [2] Psa. xcvi. 6. [3] Psa. xxvii. 4.

ence the value of Public Worship, thou wilt be glad when the Sabbath bells say to thee, "Come up to the house of the Lord." Thou wilt endeavour to put thy soul into its best trim, *by meditation and prayer in private*, that thou mayest go calm and collected before God. And, I charge thee, be sure thou goest expecting *great* things. Bethink thee, the tide of grace runs deep and wide in this ordinance. These public assemblies are the family meetings of the saints, when they come together to take refreshment in their Father's house. There they hold comforting communion with God, their Saviour, and each other. There they stand as in the presence of the divine glory. There also the angels congregate. There is a picture more like to the state of heaven than any other which this poor earth can shew. Thou rememberest that grand Alleluia which is spoken of in the book of Revelations.[1] It was as the sound of many waters. It was the melodious thunder of ten thousand times ten thousand voices. There thou hast a specimen of the temple service of heaven.

Then never, Christian Villager, never neglect attendance upon public worship. Follow

[1] Chapter xix.

thy dear Master, follow the footsteps of all the flock in this duty. They all "*loved* the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honour dwelleth." Perhaps thou considerest the exhortation needless? Alas! thou hast a treacherous heart to deal with, and this is an ensnaring world, and the wiles of the devil may draw thee off from anything. Thou wilt witness strange things among the professors of Christianity. Thou wilt see many neglecting public worship altogether, and then wickedly defending their sin by saying, "they can do without it—they can do as well at home." But hath the Lord appointed means of grace which are not *needful?* And are the *preaching of the Word* and *public prayer* of no account to them? And can their notions and practices about this matter be safe or right, when they are just contrary to the notions and practices of the *universal church of God in every age of the world?*

But I must also say a word to thee upon that most sacred and blessed ordinance, the Lord's Supper. Here again thou wilt have to beware of evil example, and to take heed to thyself. I trust thou wilt not only constantly observe thy dying Lord's command, and "do

that in remembrance of Him," but that thou wilt be, also, deeply sensible of the *value* of the holy sacrament, its helps and comforts. Sad and sinful is the treatment which Christ experiences from multitudes of *professed Christians.* Thou wilt see many never going, nor wishing to go to his table, who yet declare they believe in Him, love Him, and serve Him. Others thou wilt find presenting themselves now and then for form's sake. But they come in such a mind as makes it difficult to say, whether they think they are paying Christ a *tax* or a *compliment.* And there are yet others who put off the ordinance till they are laid on a dying bed, and then take it as a sort of passport into heaven. Oh! doth not all this afford unhappy proof how Satan hath strewed the earth with lies, and how ready deluded sinners are to pick them up and perish with them in their hand?

Lastly, Christian Villager, I should warn thee that, in the performance of these as well as of other religious duties, thou must prepare to meet with hindrances and temptations. And sometimes they will spring up in quarters where thou wouldest least expect them. Things *at home* may present difficulties; wife or chil-

dren may become snares to thee. But know that this will just put thy spirituality and thy faithfulness to the proof. In this, and in all matters which concern duty to God, take the following maxim, and keep to it,—that the Lord's MUSTS are to have, at least, as much consideration as the MUSTS of the world, and that the MUSTS of the *body* are not to be hearkened to before the MUSTS of the *soul*. Accordingly, let neither wife nor child, neither kinsfolk nor acquaintance, neither false Christian nor thoughtless worldling, ever tempt thee to neglect attendance upon the means of grace. Thou mayest freely allow that home duties must be properly fulfilled, children looked after, and things needful provided; but thou wilt at the same time maintain most firmly that the Sabbath-day *must* be kept holy, that the Lord *must* be duly waited upon in his house and ordinances, and that the kingdom of God *must* be sought *first* by thee and all that belong to thee. Walk by this rule, and thou wilt find much peace in it; and remember, whenever it happens that two MUSTS seem to come together, each demanding consideration, the lesser must yield to the greater,—the MUST of earth is to bow down before and give place to the MUST of heaven.

FAMILY WORSHIP.

"AND THESE WORDS, WHICH I COMMAND THEE THIS DAY, SHALL BE IN THINE HEART: AND THOU SHALT TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY UNTO THY CHILDREN, AND SHALT TALK OF THEM WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE."—DEUT. VI. 6, 7.

"FOR I KNOW HIM [ABRAHAM] THAT HE WILL COMMAND HIS CHILDREN AND HIS HOUSEHOLD AFTER HIM, AND THEY SHALL KEEP THE WAY OF THE LORD, TO DO JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT."—GEN. XVIII. 19.

"AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD."—JOSH. XXIV. 15.

"I WILL WALK WITHIN MY HOUSE WITH A PERFECT HEART."—PSA. CI. 2.

"THE CURSE OF THE LORD IS IN THE HOUSE OF THE WICKED: BUT HE BLESSETH THE HABITATION OF THE JUST."—PROV. III. 33.

THAT was an instructive as well as comforting word which the Lord spake, when He promised to be "the God of all the FAMILIES of Israel."[1] Herein the Lord's people are re-

[1] Jer. xxxi. 1.

minded of the privileges of their children, to whom the promises belong as well as to themselves. They are also hereby bidden to provide, that as God hath graciously offered Himself to be the God of their family, each member of it, shall choose and proclaim God to be his God and Father in Jesus Christ. If God *is* the God of their family, they are *publicly to acknowledge* this, and to glorify Him, as a family, in *family worship and religion.* Here, then, Christian Villager, I want thy attention a little while. Multitudes of professed Christians are perfect strangers to family worship. The greater part seem neither to know that it is a duty, nor to consider that it is a special privilege; while some, who do think and speak a little about it at times, too easily persuade themselves that their condition in life, or their business, hinders them from attending to it. But this is an *excuse*, not a reason. Religious duties and divine privileges are not to be pushed out of their place and lost for any worldly considerations. Surely God is to be served before man, and heaven is to be sought more than earth! Indeed, this is just a case in which the claim of God's MUST is to be attended to before every other, and the truth of

the matter runs thus,—"because family religion is of more account than *all other* family concerns, time must be found or made for FAMILY PRAYER."

Now, I do not expect thee, as a Christian, to deny this. I only fear lest, possibly, thou mayest be too easily persuaded that, in thy station of life or circumstances, thou canst not manage to have family prayer. But hear me. If thou bringest a good will and an honest heart to the matter, I will be surety for thy finding opportunity. One quarter of an hour, morning or evening, if thou canst not command both times, will be sufficient; and if thou wilt but consider thy family worship a *privilege*, and art *devout* in the performance of it, thou shalt find it bring thee in a rich return of divine grace. This is one great way of cherishing a spirit of dutifulness in thy children towards thee, and of love and kindness towards each other. The hour of family prayer is the hour of family peace. If there have been differences, this helps to heal them; if sorrows, to soothe them. There is no time of the day more precious than this to those who know its value. It is a time when thou mayest fetch down for thyself and little ones

more light and grace from heaven. It is a time for thee and thine to gather round the cross for comfort and refreshment. It is a time for sewing up what hath been ravelled out, and cleansing what hath been soiled in the soul's attire by the wear and tear of earthly occupation.

When, therefore, thou hast assembled thy family, first read a portion of Scripture, if it be but a few verses, and speak a word or two upon what thou readest if thy heart dictates. Then kneel, and, in a plain and simple prayer, make known unto God the common wants and desires, the common trials and troubles of all present. Confess family sins, and ask for family forgiveness. Thou mayest use a form of prayer if thou art not able to do without one, for this matters not, and in due time thou mayest hope to be assisted from above by the blessed Spirit who teaches how to pray. If, sometimes, thou wouldest like to read or sing a hymn also at the hour of family worship, so much the better. The songs of praise and the sighs of prayer agree well together in Christian bosoms, as thou mayest observe in many of the psalms, those sweet devotions of the son of Jesse. Nay, and ofttimes, believe me, thou

wilt find the reading of a simple hymn bring a holy calmness over thy soul, or kindle up a fire of devout feeling in thee, which thou mightest in vain have sought for without this help.

But I shall proceed to set before thee a few considerations, that will prove still more strongly the *duty* and *importance* of family worship. And first, consider for a moment the opposite side, and see how the case stands.

If thou hast no ALTAR in thy family, thou canst not be said to have God in thy family, because *God and his altar go together.* For though the Most High filleth heaven and earth with his presence, He is present, in his character as the blessed God of the gospel, only when He is sought *in the way of the gospel;* and that is, among families, in family prayer.

Again. If the worship of God be not established in thy family, thou hast nothing that distinguishes it from a *heathen* family. And dost thou not remember how the prophet couples *prayerless* families and *heathens* together, when he says, "pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know Thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy name"?[1]

[1] Jer. x. 25.

There is something so solemn and unanswerable in these two considerations, that no excuses can stand against them. But this is not all. If thou turnest to the Holy Scriptures, which are the proper authorities in a matter like this, thou wilt meet with a stream of examples all flowing in the same direction.

For instance. Thou readest of Noah, that he "prepared an ark to the saving of his house;"[1] of Job, that he used to "send for his sons and daughters, and sanctify them (that is, instruct them in the doctrines and duties of religion), rising early in the morning and offering burnt-offerings according to the number of them all;"[2] of Abraham, that he would "command his children and his household after him;"[3] of Joshua, that he publicly proclaimed, that "he and his house would serve the Lord;"[4] and of King David, that, after he had solemnly brought back the ark of God, he "returned to bless his household."[5] And even of the poor Gentile, Cornelius, thou readest, that he "feared God with all his house;"[6] and the whole of his history shews, that he took the kindest interest in the spiritual

[1] Heb. xi. 7. [2] Job i. 5. [3] Gen. xviii. 19.
[4] Josh. xxiv. 15. [5] 2 Sam. vi. 20. [6] Acts x. 2, 7. 24.

welfare of those who were servants about his person, or soldiers under his command.

Well, I ask, if there be not in all this a powerful testimony to the duty of being *concerned for the souls* of our family and household? These were men of God, most of them specially favoured of God. They knew His will well; they knew their own privileges well; they knew well the blessedness of true religion and the worth of immortal souls. And though some thousand years have rolled over their graves, they speak to us through that book which shall survive the wreck of all things, and say, "*follow me in religion as I followed God, and learn of me what I learned of Him.*"

But, Christian Villager, I have not done with this subject yet. I invite thee next to consider the *titles* which are given to Christians in the Scripture. Are they not called in one place, "kings and priests unto God?"[1] and in another, a "royal priesthood,"[2] as Israel also was called "a kingdom of priests?"[3] Now, how wilt thou answer the description of one "made a king unto God," so well as by *ruling thy house*, as much as thine own heart, under God, in the love and service of God? And

[1] Rev. i. 6. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 9. [3] Exod. xix. 6.

how wilt thou *fulfil* the priesthood-part of thy character, if thou art indeed a Christian, except by reading the Scriptures in thy family, and *leading* them in the sacrifices of prayer and praise, as well as worshipping and serving God in thine own person? Oh! Christian Villager, thine is a high calling if thou didst but fully know it! and blessed are thy privileges if thou wouldst but duly prize them! It is an instructive consideration, that all holy beings in God's creation, whether they be the glorious angels or the redeemed and sanctified people of Christ, are called a *family* by the apostle Paul, "The whole family in heaven and earth."[1] And the same apostle, in other places, seems to give the name of a *church* to a *single family*, speaking of it as "the church in that house."[2] Happy indeed is that church that is united as one family in the bonds of love and kindness! and thrice happy that family that makes up a little church in itself, with every member of it beloved of Christ and loving Him, and every heart in it a temple of the Holy Ghost, worshipping and serving God

[1] Eph. iii. 15.

[2] See Rom xvi. 5; Col. iv. 15; Philemon 2.

with sacrifices and services of faith and righteousness!

Once more. Thou mayest borrow an useful hint on this subject from that law of the Old Testament which commanded every Israelite to *dedicate his house to God.*[1] Perhaps thou hast never given a thought to this matter, but there is instruction in it. Thy house is as much the property of God as thou art; and He is honoured or disgraced in it, according as the spirit and habits of religion or the world prevail in it. Be sure, then, that He who hath provided thee with a habitation will lay claim to it, and expect thee to *use it to his glory.* And his eye will be upon it, to observe what passes there. "What have they seen in thine house?"[2] was once a startling question to good King Hezekiah: and a fearful question it would prove to many, who profess to be seeking the kingdom of God, but who, nevertheless, encourage or permit in their house such things as pertain only to the kingdom of the "Wicked One." Let me counsel thee, Christian Villager, to put thy humble dwelling solemnly under the protection of Almighty God, and to consecrate it to his ser-

[1] Deut. xx. 5. [2] 2 Kings xx. 15.

vice by family religion. Lift up in it the standard of the cross. Call it after Jehovah's name. Pray Him to come and take possession of it, and abide in it, as its rightful Lord. Pray Him to make its "walls salvation and its gates praise." Adopt the hundred and first Psalm for thy house-dedication Psalm, and make its excellent resolutions thine own. Never suffer in thy family any customs, or entertain under thy roof any guests, that dishonour thy great and holy Lord. Rule thy house *for* Him, as one placed over it *by* Him; and constantly do thy best endeavour, that every soul in it shall own his authority and love his service. And *then* thou mayest confidently expect all the blessings which are promised to the habitations of the righteous. The Lord himself will be thy keeper. His peace shall reign around thee. Thou shalt go out and come in, thou shalt lie down and rise up in safety. And amidst the awful calamities which an offended God often inflicts upon this guilty world, thou wilt have the comfort of knowing, that, at all times, and in all circumstances, thou and thine are under the loving guardianship of One, before whom even devils tremble, and whose word diseases and storms obey.

And now I shall have done all that in me lies to complete thee for the performance of the duties, and the enjoyment of the privileges of family religion, if I call thy attention to a curious but instructive prophecy, which relates to a bright gospel-day yet to come. "In that day," says the prophet Zechariah, "shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD:" and again—"Yea every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be Holiness unto the Lord of Hosts;" &c.[1] The meaning of the prophet is, that in that blessed time there shall be universal and perfect righteousness. Every thing, even the commonest, shall be used,—every action, even the least, shall be done *to the glory of Almighty God.* Men shall think, and feel, and act, altogether and in all things, *by holy rules, from holy motives,* and *for holy ends.* They shall eat and drink, transact business and converse, work and rest, *unto God.* Every animal, vessel, or tool that is used, shall be used for just and good purposes, and in a rightful manner. There shall be no misusage, and no misbehaviour. The distinction between things sacred and things common shall cease. All will be holiness, all will be

[1] Chap. xiv. verses 20, 21.

religion, all will be as once it was, as it ever ought to have been, and as, hereafter, it ever will be! All will be unto God, and God will be all in all!

Christian Villager, this will be a state of universal happiness. Doth thy heart burn within thee at the thought of it? Then I counsel thee to do this—Take the prophecy which I have named, and turn it into a *precept;* and strive to carry out its beautiful instructions, so far as may be, in thine own case NOW. It is not a height above thy reach. If thou hast grace in thee, it came down from heaven, and it will, by its own nature, be always *mounting* and *drawing thee up towards heaven also.* Look unto Jesus and be confident. Aim at nothing less than to *do* all He wishes thee, and to *be* all He can make thee. Desire the fulfilment of every duty, as much as the enjoyment of every privilege. And as concerns this instructive prophecy, when thou occupiest thy house as a tenant under God, acknowledging Him to be still its rightful owner—when thou takest care that his name is reverenced, and his laws are obeyed in it—when thou usest thy household stuff, and eatest thy daily food with content and gratitude, "sanctifying it all to

thy service by the Word of God and prayer," as the Apostle teaches[1]—when thou employest thy tools in honest labour, and with faithfulness to him who hires thee—when, in short, thou studiest that nothing which thou *doest*, or which thou *hast*, shall dishonour God, and that all which thou hast or doest shall glorify Him —*then* art thou, and thy house, and all that belongs to thee, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD JEHOVAH!"

Grace be with thee, Christian Villager, for the attainment of this heavenly state! Thou art now, it is to be hoped, fully instructed in this important subject. I only ask of thee, in conclusion, to *use with others the exhortations and reasonings which I have used with thee;* praying fervently, that many village families may thereby become families of God, by seeking Him regularly in family worship, and serving Him devotedly in family religion.

[1] Tim iv. 4, 5.

PRIVATE PRAYER.

"PRAY WITHOUT CEASING."—1 THESS. v. 17.

"CONTINUE IN PRAYER, AND WATCH IN THE SAME WITH THANKSGIVING."—COL. IV. 2.

"PRAYING ALWAYS WITH ALL PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION IN THE SPIRIT, AND WATCHING THEREUNTO WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE."—EPH. VI. 18.

"WATCH UNTO PRAYER."—1 PET. IV. 7.

"CONTINUING INSTANT IN PRAYER."—ROM. XII. 12.

ABOVE all things, Christian Villager, if thou wouldst be a man of grace, thou must be a man of prayer. Remember, *this is the grand secret of a holy and happy life.* Without this, all other means and endeavours are nothing. Private prayer is like that little regulating wheel or spring which is found in some pieces of machinery, and upon the right and steady going of which, though it be itself very small and hid from view, the good working of all the rest depends. If thou art not possessed of a habit of inward prayer, thy whole spiritual frame

will get out of order. Its power, action, and life depend on this. The Scripture saying, that according as a man soweth he shall reap, is most true in this part of spiritual husbandry. If thou *sowest* prayer by frequently practising it, thou shalt *reap* prayer by getting a spirit of it; and *a spirit of prayer* is the greatest blessing which God can give thee after thou art become a child of his kingdom. Only consider some of the precepts and exhortations about prayer which are found in the Word of God: "Pray without ceasing"—"Watch unto prayer"—"Continuing instant in prayer"—and, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication." See here how the same thing is repeated by different Apostles to different Churches; and mark what forcible words they have used in recommending it. If there were not some good and powerful reasons for the practice of this duty, thou wouldst not have had it pressed upon thee in this remarkable manner: but the fact is, the *necessity* of prayer, the *use* of prayer, and the *benefits* of prayer are all so great, that they cannot be spoken of too often or too strongly. I trust thou wilt give the most careful attention to all which I have to say to thee upon this important subject. I will do my

best to shew thee something of its depth, and length, and breadth, and height. It would occupy us too long if I were to take thee through every part of prayer: but I shall endeavour to give thee such a view of it, and to put thee so far on thy way in it, that thou wilt be able, with the help of God, to go on of thyself. And I pray that the good Lord may lead thee into a full experimental knowledge of this inestimable grace.

First then. Thou knowest that thy soul, if it hath been "created anew in Christ Jesus," lives, and moves, and hath its being in Christ. Now, the grace by which its life is preserved and its welfare promoted, is received through the means of prayer. The soul is quickened from above into a *hungering* and *thirsting* after its heavenly supplies, and this very state is a state of prayer; it then gives *utterance* to its desire in prayer, and in *continued* prayer awaits the arrival of the blessing desired; and the blessing is sooner or later conveyed to it through this same exercise of believing prayer. There is no grace which thou canst require but thou wilt find, upon consideration, that prayer is the proper channel by which thou mayest expect it to come to thee. To be *lacking* in

prayer, therefore, is to *rob thy soul of its resources*; while to *cease* from it *altogether*, would be to *starve thy soul to death*. In the history of all the saints, thou wilt find that they prospered in grace, in proportion as they kept close to its fountain head, which is Christ; and the *way* of keeping close to Him is to maintain a spirit of unceasing prayer.

Again. Notwithstanding all the blessings of the gospel are freely promised and freely given, God will be "*inquired of*" for them.[1] His rule is, thou shalt have for thy *asking*, and *according to* thy asking; the door shall be opened to thy *knocking*, and *according to* thy knocking; thou shalt find through thy *seeking*, and *according to* thy seeking. It is plain, therefore, that *asking* must go before *having*—that the *prayer* must go before the *blessing*. Thou hast no right to expect one single promise out of the gospel treasury, till the lip of faith hath begged for it, and the hand of faith is stretched out to receive it. "Ye have not, because ye ask not," is an Apostle's rebuke to some prayerless seekers after blessings in his day.[2]

And remember that expression, "*according to* thy asking." God is never straitened in

[1] See Ezek. xxxvi. 37. [2] James iv. 2.

Himself: but it is we that straiten Him by the narrowness of our desires. As the Lord Jesus could not do many mighty works among his own countrymen "BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF,"[1] so God is prevented from blessing us so much as He would by our limited prayers. *Great prayers* for grace must go before *great possessions* of grace. If thou wouldst have largely, thou must ask largely. God says to thee, "first open thy mouth wide, and then I will fill it."

Again. Without a habit of inward prayer the *graces* of thy soul will inevitably *decline*. They will become like the fruits and flowers of the earth in a time of grievous drought. They will be weak, sickly, and dying. Oh! I warn thee solemnly, Christian Villager, against a *slackening* in prayer, for it is the beginning of evils of which thou mayest never see the end. If thou slackenest in prayer, thou wilt most assuredly begin to fall off in every duty and habit of vital religion. Thou wilt soon become cold, negligent, and earthly. Thou wilt lose the light of God's countenance, and all the strength and comfort which it imparts. Thou wilt then get *mistrustful* of God; and thy heart will be infested with every hard thought and

[1] Compare Matt. xiii. 58, and Mark vi. 4, 5, 6.

hateful feeling concerning Him, which wicked devils or sinful nature can suggest. Gradually wilt thou depart to a greater and greater distance from Him, until thou art in a state little better than despair; and, possibly, thou mayest never, at least in this life, see the light or taste the love of heaven again. Nay, and if thou shouldst at last, through infinite mercy, return to God once more, (for I deny not but thou wouldst return, *if saving grace hath been really planted in thee*), yet, consider with what bitterness and anguish of mind thou wouldst retrace thy steps. What a return would thine be! Thou wouldst bedew thy path with tears of blood. Thou wouldst move along with the suffering of one bruised or broken in almost every limb. Thy prayers would be made in *agonies* instead of *comforts;* and thou wouldst never, in all likelihood, know the sense of joy. The "joy of the Lord" is for them that wait on Him in prayer.

Such hath been, and such is ever likely to be, the history of a Christian *neglecting prayer.* And if sometimes the condition of a neglecter of prayer be not quite so bad as this, so far, at least, as his own feelings are concerned; if he continues his round of *outward* duties, and

therefore persuades himself that all is well, notwithstanding he lives without the habit of inward prayer,—why, what is the name, and what is the value of such a spiritual condition as his? He is fast sinking into that disease which had fastened upon the Laodicean formalists;[1] and the next state to that is DEATH!

Again. Without this habit of prayer thou wilt neither be protected from the assaults of thine enemies, nor be able to stand against them when they come upon thee. Thy soul must put on its gospel-armour with prayer—then in prayer it must go forth to the battle—it must watch the movements of its foes in prayer—it must smite them in prayer—and in prayer it must carry on the whole of its perilous warfare. When praying, thou art covered with thy gospel-shield and buckler. Satan may come and look at thee, but he cannot get near to hurt thee. Thy praying is as a fence around thee, beyond which the feet of the Lord's enemies may not pass. It is like that hedge which God had set about his servant Job; and which kept the devil from laying his hands upon him.[2] But and if Satan should be permitted to assault thee when praying, thou art

[1] Rev. iii. 14-18. [2] Job i. 10.

ready for him. Thou art standing up, weapon in hand, and thine arm is nerved for smiting. And the sword of the word, wielded in faith and prayer, will do achievements for thee that will fill even thyself with wonder. The enemies of righteous Daniel were many and powerful, and the measures which they took to ruin him were most artfully contrived. But what then? Why, Daniel betook himself to prayer, and "continued in prayer;" and within the wall of prayer he abode so safely, that not one of a den of lions approached to hurt him; while his enemies, as thou knowest, all fell before his prayers.

Thou readest of similar triumphs of prayer in many instances in Scripture. It was the prayerful uplifting of Moses' hand and rod, that rolled back the tide of battle upon conquering Amalek, and gave Israel the final victory on that hard-fought day.[1] It was in answer to prayer, that Sampson was enabled to put forth his strength once more, and to bring down an instantaneous and terrible death upon all the Philistine warriors.[2] The stone which the stripling David took out of the brook, and

[1] Exodus xvii. 11. [2] Judges xvi. 28-30.

then slang in prayer,[1] dashed, like a thunderbolt, into the forehead of Goliath, and the giant fell before the Lord.[2] The prayer which the same David put up, on hearing that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with his son Absalom, turned even Ahithophel's famous counsels into foolishness.[3] King Asa, at the head of five hundred thousand mighty men, would not venture into battle, except in the name of his God; but to Him he cried in prayer, and rested on Him, and conquered.[4] King Jehoshaphat and all Judah with him, on hearing of the approach of a great multitude of invaders, when they knew not what to do, stood up before the Lord in prayer; and the same moment received a special command to go out against the foe on the morrow, with an assurance that they should "see the salvation of the Lord with them."[5] Lastly, there is the example of the Lord Jesus himself, thy great Captain in these

[1] Though we are not *told* that David prayed on this occasion, every word which he uttered, both to his friends and to the giant, betokens as much. If he had not put the issue of the battle into the hands of God in prayer, his high confidence of victory would have been *presumption* and not *faith*.

[2] 1 Sam. xvii. 49. [3] 2 Sam. xv. 31.

[4] 2 Chron. xiv. 8, 11. [5] 2 Chron. xx. 17.

holy wars. Throughout his trying life, in every undertaking, distress, and conflict, his invariable resource was prayer. This was his protection and his support. He prayed before he acted, and he acted praying. He prayed before he endured, and he endured praying. And well thou knowest how, in his last conflict, when, in the midst of unutterable horrors, the legions of darkness were permitted to break in upon his soul, He stood the brunt of that dreadful night in prayer.

This, therefore, must be the great weapon with which thou must meet the enemies of thy soul; and amongst them, that dangerous one, *indwelling sin*. Thou must keep under thy corruptions by means of prayer. These Canaanites within will not fly before mere human power. Resolutions, and rules, and efforts will all fail thee, and only fill thy mind with sad despondencies. Remember, thy resource is prayer. With the strong arm of prayer they can, and they must, be put down; and the Bible is full of instructions to direct and encourage in the successful way of combating and conquering them.

And now, let what hath been said suffice to shew thee the use of prayer, as a means of

keeping off evils from thee, or of *supporting thee under them*, and *saving thee out of them*. Thou must have heard enough to be convinced, that God hath chosen *this way* of putting forth his own strength for his people, and protecting them; and that *in this way*, therefore, they must seek after and expect his aid. I will now proceed to point out *how prayer will enable thee to attain the greatest benefits and blessings.*

God invites thee to come to Him for all spiritual and temporal mercies; for the grant of them at first, and the continuance of them afterwards. Forgiveness of sin, renewal of heart, the healing of backslidings, the lifting up from falls, light in darkness, strength in weakness, comfort in sorrow, and peace in trouble,—these are all to be obtained and to be received through prayer; and without prayer thou wilt not get them. And as concerns thy *temporal* mercies, though it be true that the Lord "maketh his sun to rise upon the evil as well as the good, and sendeth rain alike upon the just and the unjust,"[1] thou hast no *right* to expect these mercies without prayer; and, certainly, without prayer thou wilt not find them blessings in the *end*. It is praying for them,

[1] Matt. v. 45.

and then using them in prayer, that *sanctifies* them to thy benefit, and glorifies Him who so graciously bestows them.

Again. As, without prayer, thy graces would decline, so by prayer, they will be kept in exercise, and advanced in strength. Prayer will quicken and bring out all holy affections in thee. Faith, love, humility, meekness, patience, godly sorrow for sin, filial fear and reverence, submission, cheerful obedience, and delight in God,—all these are attained by prayer, and fostered by prayer; and in prayer they are put forth and strengthened. And never are thy graces so well employed, or so sure to improve, as when they are directed towards Him who is their blessed author, and who ought always to be their great object.

Again. It is one of thy privileges, as a Christian, *to hold communion with God.* God invites thee to let Him have thy company—yea, invites thee to spend much time with Him, in order that He may bless thee. His design is nothing less than to communicate *Himself* to thee; that is, to give thee of his own fulness—to conform thee, so far as thou art capable of it, to his own image, and to make thee partaker of his own blessedness. But the gospel way of

holding communion with God is prayer. If thou settest thyself to *draw near* to Him, this is done by prayer; and whilst thou art engaged with Him, all thy part will be performed in prayer. Supposing thou art considering his *power* and *goodness*, as they are seen in the works of *creation;* thou wilt be led, like David,[1] to think of the favour which hath been shewn thy guilty race, and thou wilt breathe forth something which hath the character of prayer. Again—art thou contemplating the *perfections* of the Almighty, his *wisdom*, *grace*, and *love*, as they are manifested in the wonders of redemption? still more will thy thoughts turn to prayer. And if thou art pondering over all that God hath done for thee in thine own soul, and all that He is constantly doing for thee, and will continue to do, then, above all, will thy heart break forth into prayer, and in prayer find delight and comfort. In short, whatever is the subject that employs thy thoughts when thou art conversing with God, whether thou art in his house, or in thy closet, or going by the way, thou wilt find thy feelings, if they are under the influence of divine grace, naturally fall into the course of prayer. Nay, I may

[1] Psa. viii. 3-9.

add, that, in a *forgiven* sinner, still in the flesh and still in danger, *every* thought and feeling will, sooner or later, take the character and form of prayer. In him *love* prays—*gratitude* prays—*wonder* prays—yea, even *joy* prays. And when to a sense of his own utter unworthiness there is added that sight of the divine glory, which is often vouchsafed to the eye of faith in these holy communings with God, prayer is quite as much a *relief* as it is a duty. A tide of thoughts and feelings, too strong to be kept in bounds, will find its vent in a gush of prayer.

And it is this conversing, in prayerful meditation, with God below, which is to make thee meet for holding communion with Him above. Thou needest to be brought into frequent contact with Him, that thou mayst become used to his holy and awful company. For how art thou to get truly acquainted with Him, with his mind and his perfections? how art thou to understand, or share, the converse which He is pleased to hold with his people? how wilt thou bear to go before Him, and dwell with Him throughout eternity, unless thou art, in a measure, *trained* and *educated* for this, and *accustomed* to be with Him, in *this* life? Surely thou dost not suppose

that these things will come to thee without thy seeking them? Neither canst thou expect that *habits* of heavenly thought and feeling will *suddenly* spring up in thee on thy entering the unseen world. No! *habits* are the growth of time? and there is no *change* beyond the grave. The work of grace must be done *in the day of grace.* If thou wouldst be near God in *person* hereafter, thou must be often with Him in *prayer* now.

Again. By this habit of prayer thou mayst reach the high attainment of *living as ever in the divine presence.* I cannot tell thee *all* that is contained in this state of soul; but I can tell thee, that there is in it a happiness which an angel would envy thee, if he did not already possess it. When thou art constantly bringing home to thy experience the presence of God, that is, living in the recollection that thou art ever before Him, and in his very presence; and when thy feelings towards Him are those of a pardoned sinner, redeemed with the precious blood of his eternal Son, and now made a child, and loved as a child, and treated as a child, and promised the inheritance of a child in heaven itself; when, I say, thy feelings towards God are of this gospel character, the sense of his pre-

sence will be to thee the highest privilege which thou canst enjoy below. To live as in the presence of God, is the way to possess a calm, collected, humble, and heavenly frame of soul. To live as in the presence of God, is to live *above* this grovelling world, its low desires and vain pursuits. To live as in his presence, is to live secure and happy in the consciousness of divine favour and divine protection. Though all around thee should be confusion, uproar, and sin, all *within* thee, if thou art living as in the Almighty's presence, will still preserve the order and the peace of heaven. Thou art *before thy God*, and that thought is sufficient. It fills thee, it composes thee, it enlarges and exalts thy mind. With *little* things thou hast now nothing in common. The *greatness* of the Being upon whom thy attention is fixed, communicates a greatness of soul to thee. Thou art growing in the likeness of the divine nature. Thou art thus *qualifying* to take thy place among that glorified company, who stand before the Holy One on his eternal throne.

Christian Villager, art thou astonished at the *height* of privilege to which I am now calling thee? Be *astonished* indeed, but be not *discouraged*. Villager as thou art, it is all within

thy reach, if thou art but a child of God. Remember, the secret of success is *prayer* and *the use of the Holy Scriptures*. Thou must certainly pray *much*, to reach this high and heavenly ground; and thou must *continue* in prayer, in order to keep possession of it. But prayer will become increasingly *easy* and *pleasant* to thee, as thou givest thyself to it more and more. And as they who travel over lofty mountains do drink in fresh life and spirit, the higher they go, from the superior purity of the mountain air; so wilt thou experience a strengthening and sustaining power in the very atmosphere of these spiritual heights, to which thou must ascend to hold communion with God. Thou wilt find also, as doth the mountain traveller, that moving *upward* becomes less and less difficult. When thou hast reached one point, thou wilt derive such refreshment and delight from thy position as will cause thee to be soon setting forward to another; and the time will come, when thou wilt truly mourn that worldly employments, or the weakness of the flesh, compel thee to descend to the lower regions of common thought and feeling.——But the *Holy Scriptures* will be also a chief means of bringing thee to, and maintaining thee in, this blessed

state. I wish thee to mark this well. I am telling thee, that, *by means of God's own book*, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, thou art to be fitted for the company of Almighty God. For the *will* to approach Him, for *matter* to converse about with Him, and for the *right spirit* when in his presence, thou art to go to the Holy Scriptures. Delightfully will they daily renew, if daily read, thy dispositions and powers for this high employment. From among their great and holy truths, from their doctrines, precepts, promises, and histories, thou wilt be furnished with *thoughts* and *feelings* suitable to thy purpose. The heavenly book will make thee *heavenly-minded*. Thou wilt humbly talk with God in his own language, and on his own subjects; and most graciously will God converse with thee through the same Scriptures, and enrich thee with all wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself and of his Christ.

Lastly. Thy *comfortable assurance of being in a state of peace with God*, will much depend on the *disposedness* of thy soul to prayer. It is in this way especially that the Holy Spirit will "*bear witness*" with thine own spirit, as to thy real *sonship*.[1] He will cause thee to groan

[1] Rom. viii. 16.

under a sense of indwelling corruption. He will create in thee a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. He will inspire thee with a delight in God—with a longing for his inward presence—and with an intense desire to be made like Him. And all this hath in it the *nature* of prayer, and will shew itself in the *utterance* of prayer. Under such feelings as these, thou wilt as instinctively betake thyself to prayer, as the little child carries his troubles and sorrows to his mother's ear, or as the thirsty hart panteth after the water brooks. And when thou art *indisposed* to, or *unfit* for, prayer, thou hast reason to suspect that things are not going well. Thou art, for the time, either borne down by the burden of the flesh, or sinfully giving thyself to earthly things. Thy only comfort and safety will be, *to regain a praying frame.* This will be the "return of thy soul to its rest." And in cherishing this praying frame at all times, thou wilt find great reward. Thou wilt seldom then have to mourn, as one *deserted* by God; nor wilt thou be visited by those painful doubts and questionings, which are the portion of Christians *neglecting prayer.*

Having already named to thee the Holy Scriptures, as a great means for advancing thee

to a high and heavenly state of soul, I will now mention to thee one or two *considerations*, which may help thee yet further in this blessed employment.

Accustom thyself to call to mind thy many and great *necessities*. Thou hast a hell to escape—a judgment to prepare for—self to crucify—indwelling sin to conquer—perils of every kind to pass through—and fierce and powerful enemies to wrestle against. And in all this thou canst do nothing whatsoever without *an unceasing supply of divine grace*. Let these considerations often quicken thee to pray.

Again. Let the *love of God in Christ* be the frequent subject of thy meditations. Think *what* that love hath done for thee. Think what must have been thy *condition*, to require such a cost as the precious blood of Christ. Think of God's *longsuffering* towards thee in thy natural state, when thou wert full of enmity and rebelliousness against Him; and think how often even now—yes, Christian Villager, *even now*—thou triest his forbearance, by thy disobedience, and impatience, and discontent, and unthankfulness! These thoughts will much help prayer.

Again. Give half an hour occasionally, to meditate on the *sufferings* of the divine Saviour

—on the agonies of Gethsemane and the cross. Stand still and commune with thine own heart about this. *Thou* hast been a party in the dreadful work of putting the Son of God to mortal agony, and even to death itself. *Thy* sins, the sins thou didst commit but yesterday, the sins which thou mayst fall into this very day, pressed heavy on his suffering soul, as part of the mass of a world's guilt; and pierced Him with the pains of hell. Consider over these things with solemn earnestness. Turn to Isaiah's touching description of the "man of sorrows;"[1] the man made sorrowful by *thee* amongst the rest;—and peruse, in prayer, the account of his passion and death in the gospels.

Thou mayst fetch every *motive* to prayer, and derive great *life* and *power* for it, from meditating on this deep subject. It contains, in one view, all that may convince thee of thy *guilt*, and warn thee off from *sin*,—all that may display to thee the depths of the *love* of God, and win thee to Him with *grateful affection*.

Once more. Let the *daily mercies of Providence* furnish thee both with *matter* and *means* of prayer. Thou art not only "fearfully and wonderfully made," but thou art also fearfully

[1] Chapter liii.

and wonderfully *preserved*. As thy natural life, in the first place, was a mercy, so is thy natural living. Every breath thou drawest is a mercy. Every step thou takest is a mercy. Every faculty and sense which thou hast is a mercy, and their continuance is a continual mercy. Thy food is also a mercy. Thy raiment is a mercy. Thy health and strength are mercies. All that thou hast are mercies. And wilt thou, a man of such mercies, *not* be a man of prayer? Wilt thou not accustom thyself to ask for the *divine blessing* on these mercies, as well as for the mercies themselves? Wilt thou not pray to be kept from *abusing* these mercies, and so compelling God, as the wicked do, to make them *curses* to thee?—to "curse thy blessings?"[1] Wilt thou not rather endeavour, by a habit of prayer in the use of them, to make them so many *occasions* of *communion* with God? to make them daily *motives* for blessing Him for his goodness, and daily *means* for exercising thy graces? Thou wilt find this to be a secret of practical religion of no common value. Thou wilt find this a way of *hallowing God's name* in every circumstance, and of having everything around thee *sancti-*

[1] Mal. ii. 2.

fied to thy use. Thou wilt thus learn how to put on "the garments of salvation" along with thy earthly raiment, and while eating "the bread that perisheth," to partake of the bread of heaven.

There are two most instructive examples of this *prayerful* life in the persons of David and Nehemiah. Thou mayest behold them *practising* what thou hearest me recommending. These two men of God shewed forth their religion, as all should shew it, by bringing it into *every* thing, and making it form *part* of everything. And they used *prayer* as their grand means and their great comfort and support in this. The finger of God hath written out David's character so plainly in the Psalms, that thou hast only to go to them to see how he exemplified all that I am saying. He lived to God. He lived so as to prove the *sincerity* of his *own* declaration, "Thou art my *portion*, O Lord."[1] He "set the Lord alway before him."[2] When he laid down to rest he committed himself to the hands of God.[3] When he awoke, whether at midnight or at dawn, he was "still with God."[4] God "heard his voice

[1] Psa. cxix. 57.
[2] Psa. xvi. 8.
[3] Psa. iv. 8.
[4] Psa. cxxxix. 18.

in prayer betimes in the morning," and at noon and in the evening prayer or praise was still sounding on his tongue, or breathing forth from his heart.[1] Thou mayst see from his Psalms and from his history that throughout the whole day he was thus "waiting on God."[2] He went out praying, he came in praying, and prayer was interwoven with all the business of the day. His life was one long prayer.

From him, too, thou mayst learn the proper *character* of prayer. His praying was *penitential, affectionate, confiding*, and often *burning as with the fire of heaven*. At times thou seest him cast down, unhappy, loathing himself, pouring out confessions of his iniquity, and ready to sink altogether. Again, and often in the very same psalm, he mounts up, recovers his faith, his hope, his comfort, and his strength, and breaks out into praises and blessings to his heavenly Father. Now all this is preciously instructive to thee. Thou findest that David was a man of like passions with thyself,—weak, sinful, nothing; and thou findest that, *by the grace of God*, he rose above his weaknesses, obtained pardon for his sins, was made holy in opposition to his corruptions, and lived and

[1] Psa. v. 3. also lv. 17. [2] Psa. xxv. 5.

died an heir of glory. Remember David was *a man of prayer.*

Again, turn to the history of Nehemiah. There thou seest another man living in the same spirit, walking by the same rule. Nehemiah, like David, "gave himself unto prayer." Very striking are the instances of a *principle* of prayer, and of a *prayerful spirit* in this good man. Thou art told in his history[1] how he became informed of the desolation of Jerusalem, and of the reproach and affliction of his countrymen. And what was he led to do in consequence? Why, his very first act was prayer,—fervent, penitential prayer.[2] And as he had it in his mind to endeavour to do something for his poor brethren, through the favour of King Artaxerxes, to whom he was cup-bearer, he prayed for a special blessing on anything which hereafter he should say to him on that subject.[3] Well, and now follow him to his place before the king, presenting, as was his office, the cup of wine, and mark what took place. He is asked a certain question by his royal master,[4]—a question, upon the answer to which much depended,—a ques-

[1] Neh. i. 1–3.
[2] Chap. i. 4–7.
[3] Chap. i. 11.
[4] Chap. ii. 4.

tion requiring great wisdom and prudence in him who answered it. In an instant *Nehemiah is with God in secret prayer.*[1] He is taking counsel of Him who is the "Father of lights" and the giver of wisdom. Then, and not till then, in reliance on the promise to prayer, he gave his reply;[2] and it was, no doubt, a reply, as the whole history shews, presented to his mind by God—the God who hears and answers prayer. Again, behold the same man in his troubles at Jerusalem,—beset with dangers, difficulties, and vexations, that would have dismayed any heart but one that knew the comfort and the power of prayer. In all these Nehemiah's strength is *prayer.* He *works*, praying,[3]—he *takes measures for defence*, praying,[4]—he *suffers the mocking of his enemies*, praying,[5]—he *bears up against their terrors*, praying,[6]—he *denies himself his own rights*, praying,[7]—and with prayer, and in prayer, he carried on all his difficult work of reforming the sinful habits of his countrymen, and restoring the pure worship of God.[8]

Let us join in a thanksgiving to God, Chris-

[1] Neh. ii. 4. [2] Chap. ii. 5. [3] Chap. iv. 4–6.
[4] Chap. iv. 9. [5] Chap. iv. 3, 4. [6] Chap. vi. 9.
[7] Chap. v. 18, 19. [8] See Chap. xiii.

tian Villager, for these two examples. They are very valuable. They prove beyond a question that, however profane men may sneer or nominal Christians disbelieve it, a man may *live* in prayer, and that *every* thing may be said or done in prayer. And, in religion, that which *may* be *should* be; for *privilege neglected is mercy despised, and a means unused is, so far, sin encouraged and grace lost.* Besides, it is not to be forgotten, that these two men acted under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The same blessed Spirit hath caused their histories to be handed down to us in the book of God, and, in these two considerations, thou shouldst discern a message from above, bidding thee learn and imitate the way in which David and Nehemiah found favour of the Lord and served Him.

And now, Christian Villager, methinks it is time I should begin to draw my discourse upon this subject to a close. I believe thou wilt allow there is a height, and a depth, and a length, and a breadth in it, which hath well deserved the attention we have bestowed upon it, and which might, indeed, without giving occasion for weariness, occupy us much longer. But let what hath been said suffice. My great

aim was to convince thee, *not* that Christians should pray regularly at certain times, for that is a duty which all perceive, but that they might and ought to *live* in prayer. *That* is the great point; let me fix that deeply in thy mind. And I trust thou art not only convinced of the *truth* of all that hath been said, but that thou hast already taken a resolution to begin forthwith a life of prayer, if thou hast not done so before. For even Christians little think how prayer may be, and should be, spread over and mixed up with *all* that they do and say. They should set out with *this* as the grand principle of their religious life, and all the rest would follow in due course. And be encouraged, Christian Villager, in this holy undertaking. Be encouraged, I say, and fear not. Remember Christ is honoured by thy attempting great things *in his name*. Yea, and the higher thy attempts, and the larger thy desires, the more He is honoured, and God in Him. Let it be thy *first* act to pray for a blessing on thy *intention*, to pray *for* a praying spirit and a prayerful life. Prevail on God, in this way, to *speak to thy heart*, and *draw* it powerfully after Himself. Thou hast then made a beginning which shall certainly have

a happy end. The Lord "never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain."[1] And do not grow dispirited because thou mayst not get on, at first, so *fast* as thou wouldst, or so well as thou didst *expect*. God despiseth not the day of small things,[2] and surely it is not for thee to do so. One single grain of *praying grace* is what ten millions of worlds could not purchase, and what no one but the Almighty God could give thee. If, therefore, thou hast got even that one grain, thou hast, manifestly, the God of *all* grace on thy side. Thou hast everything to hope, and nothing to despond about. Nevertheless thou must bear in mind, that this is a duty which especially requires a *patient continuance* and *perseverance* in the practice of it. As a Christian *traveller*, a pilgrim of Zion, thou art ever to be *moving onward*, for thy journey ends but with the grave. Thou must, therefore, be *constantly providing* for thy travelling necessities, or thou wilt soon fail. Yesterday's grace will not serve thee to-day; neither wilt thou keep thy ground, much less add to it, unless thou steadily usest the means by which thou hast got thus far. Thou didst *set out* with prayer, and with prayer alone wilt

[1] Isa. xlv. 19. [2] Zech. iv. 10.

thou *advance*. And, believe me, thou wilt find the way blessedly smoothed before thee from time to time, and occasionally, perhaps, when thou art fearing thou shalt scarcely hold on any farther. This is quite the character of Christian travelling, and it is beautifully suited to promote the traveller's good. For God hath so mingled the rough and the smooth, the bitter and the sweet, in the journeyings of his people, that they could not well afford to be without either. Thus, as a pilgrim going to Zion, thou wilt be called to put out thy strength and make constant exertions; but *grace* converts this into *useful exercise*, and frequently even *enjoyment*. Thou wilt be called also to endure sundry trials and hardships, and some probably great ones; but the same grace makes use of these to improve thy spiritual knowledge, health, and vigour. Sometimes thou mayst be out in the night and overtaken by the tempest; but this is to teach thee to walk more by *faith* and less by *sight*—to make thee duly sensible, which otherwise thou wouldst not be, of the blessing of *light* and *fair weather*; and to cause thee to lean *more entirely* upon the kindness and power of the everlasting arm. By thus keeping them, as it were, in a wintry

climate, and subjecting them to a hard training, God makes his children active and robust. They learn to press forward boldly; to stand fast when they are assaulted; to "quit themselves like men and be strong." And besides all this, He hath prepared, even for the present happiness of them that love Him, such things as eye hath never seen or heart conceived; but which He reveals to them by his Spirit, as they walk with Him.[1] These are the pleasures of the road leading to Immanuel's land. St Paul hath told thee something of them. His gracious Master blest him with so many and such extraordinary ones, that his unglorified soul could not have borne them without the addition of that "thorn in the flesh;"—a thorn never more merciful than when it pierced him sharpest.[2]

Having thus briefly warned thee, Christian Villager, of what thou hast to *expect* on thy way, let me now communicate to thee a few practical hints, which will guide thee in thy endeavour to *live in prayer*.

Be sure thou givest God thy *first thoughts*, thy waking thoughts. This is *beginning* the day well. For who hath such a right to the

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. [2] 2 Cor. xii. 7.

first movements of thy mind and heart as the great God, thy Creator, Sovereign, and Preserver? It is He that is about thy bed, to guard thee during the darkness, and refresh thee with repose; and it is He that renews all thy powers to life again.[1] See, therefore, that thou *acknowledge* this by gratefully *presenting* thyself, and all that thou hast, to Him. Call upon thy "soul and all that is within thee to bless his holy name."[2] Thou wilt require to be very watchful, and very determined, about this point. The flesh will naturally keep thee on earth, for earth is its home, and its delight; so that if thou *risest*, thou risest not *easily*, but as the poor bird that hath made its escape from the fowler, but still carries a portion of its bonds upon its wing. It is not held indeed, but it is *laden*, and so art thou; and thy rising at all is the work of almighty grace within thee. The devil will be beforehand in filling thy mind, if possible, and will steal in among thy waking thoughts. He knows the advantage of getting *first* possession; and if he succeed, thou mayst be cut off, the whole of that day, from enjoying communion with God. Thou wilt have enough to do in struggling against the devices

[1] Psa. cxxxix. 3. Psa. iii. 5. [2] See Psa. ciii. 1–5.

of "the wicked one," and undoing the mischief which he hath wrought within thee.

Again. Never quit thy house in the morning *until thou hast been on thy knees in prayer:* and if thou canst, *get apart by thyself* for this purpose. It is an advantage to be *alone* with God. And do not suffer any pretence or excuse whatsoever to draw thee off from this great duty. No words can be too strong to express the importance of it, both to thy welfare and thy comfort through the day. Thy circumstances, as a labourer, may sometimes bring thee into temptation about this matter; but, remember what I say to thee. Thou mayst have put on thy clothes, and eaten thy meal, and got together thy tools, and spoken thy last words to thy wife and children, but—still thou art not *really ready* to go forth to thy day's work, *if thou hast not been with God in prayer.* No, Christian Villager, though thou mayst be prepared with everything else, thou art not prepared with the "one thing needful"—THOU HAST NOT PRAYED!—thy feet are, therefore, not "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."[1] And what wilt thou do without that? Whatever may be thy resolutions or hopes,

[1] Eph. vi. 15.

whatever excuses thou mayest make to thy conscience, I tell thee confidently that things will not go well with thee. For how shouldst thou expect to walk comfortably, or to walk aright? *A gospel preparation* of soul is only to be had through *gospel means;* and that means is prayer.[1] Thy soul, therefore, being unshod, will be quite unfit to perform its day's journey. Its road lies through duties, many of which are *difficult*, and in the face of enemies, all of whom are *powerful.* Thou canst not walk at peace with God, because thou hast kept away from Him; neither wilt thou be at peace with thy self, nor probably with those around thee. Thou wilt, most likely, on that day get a fall, or wander out of the way, or turn thy back before thy foes, or dishonour thy profession, or in some way or other experience hurt, and sorrow, and shame. And this will be to teach thee the *absolute necessity* of continual prayer—to make thee feel thy own *nothingness*, and to *punish* thee for thy sinful negligence. If ever thou art, unhappily, tempted thus to slight Almighty God in the beginning of the day, I charge thee to lose no time in going to Him, deeply humbled and

[1] Psa. x. 17, and Prov. xvi. 1.

penitent; *confessing thy sin*, and *imploring his forgiveness*. This is the only way to get the breach which thou hast made closed up, and the strength which thou hast lost restored. And never, never be guilty of such an omission again. I speak to thee strongly on this point, because I have witnessed most distressing cases of *backsliding* which *began* with this. Depend on it, the Lord is jealous of being *duly waited* on. And in no way canst thou more wrong thy poor soul, than by leaving it to go through the day with the divine blessing unimplored. This is to deprive it of that *protection*, *guidance*, and *support*, without which it cannot but sin and suffer.

We will suppose, however, that thou hast begun the day with sincere prayer. Thy next care is to "*continue in prayer*,"[1] as the apostle exhorts. It is a scripture declaration, that "the Lord is with you while ye be with Him."[2] Now, as prayer is the gospel way of *going* to God, so is it also the way of *abiding* with Him, and *keeping Him with you*. To this end, thou must observe another rule given thee by the apostle, which is, to "*watch unto prayer*"[3]—to

[1] Col. iv. 2. [2] 2 Chron. xv. 2. [3] 1 Pet. iv. 7.

watch, that thou *lose not* the spirit of prayer, and to watch after such things as will help to *quicken* thee in it. Watching and praying act together like the eye and hand. Watching is the eye, that sees good or evil coming; and prayer is the hand which is immediately put forth to take the good or to keep off the evil. Thou hast many enemies to prayer, both within and without thee, and these thou must watch *against:* and thou hast many helps to prayer provided in the Gospel, and these thou must watch *for.*——Thou shouldst watch during the day over all the interests of God's kingdom in thy heart; looking out for whatever *hinders*, or whatever *advances* it; and endeavouring that *every thought and feeling* shall be brought into captivity to his rule of grace and love.——Thou shouldst watch, to see if thy *besetting sin* is more completely mortified, and thy *most lacking* duty better filled.——Thou shouldst watch the door of thy lips, of thine ears, of thine eyes. Do not *willingly* look at, or hear, or speak anything which is *unbecoming* the holy gospel. Many enemies steal in or out through these passages; and this is why thou hearest men of God speaking, in different ways, of the

precautions which they used.[1]——Watch also for opportunities of glorifying God *without* thee, as well as within thee. Watch to *do* good, as well as to *get* good—to *spread abroad* the blessings of salvation, as well as to enjoy them thyself. Thou wilt find abundant room for practising these things among thy *fellow-labourers* during the day. Be very careful how thou behavest thyself among them. Thou mayest, possibly, be the instrument of great good, or great mischief to them. Remember, thou art a CHRISTIAN. Let them see wherein a Christian *differs* from other men. Attend to thy work, and do it fully and faithfully. Let thy speech, if thou conversest, be sober and profitable; "ministering grace" and not folly to thy companions.[2] In short, never forget either *what* thou art, or whither thou art bound. A Christian is *a man always going to heaven.* He has no time to loiter, or to trifle. He has sent forward all his hopes and interests to a better country, and thither he is following them as fast as may be. Oh, yes! Christian Villager, thou must assert thy right to be *consistent*, and to live *true to thy profession*, as much

[1] See Psa. xvii. 3; xxxix. 1; and cxli. 3; also Job xxxi. 1, and Psa. xxxviii. 13. [2] Eph. iv. 29.

as worldlings do to theirs. If diligence and zeal be commended in earthly matters, thou wilt claim to have the same respect granted to devotedness in heavenly things. It is hard indeed to deny to the concerns of *eternity*, the privileges which are allowed to the concerns of *time*.

Again. Thou must take notice of another rule laid down by the apostle, which is to "*pray in the spirit*,"[1] or, as St Jude calls it, "in the Holy Ghost."[2] "Praying in the Holy Ghost" is praying in a spirit given by God the Holy Ghost; and no prayer is of any service except it be inspired, that is, breathed into the heart by Him. But God hath graciously promised the spirit of prayer to all who seek it, and He calls it "a spirit of grace and supplications."[3] And the good Spirit, when he comes to thee, will "help thy infirmities." He will be in thee a "spirit of adoption," teaching thee to pray affectionately as a son, and to address God by the endeared name of "Father."[4] See, therefore, that thou regularly petition for the quickening influences and gracious teaching of this good Spirit, and, in *de-*

[1] Eph. vi. 18.
[2] Jude 20.
[3] Zech. xii. 10.
[4] Rom. viii. 15, 26.

pendence on his help, continue watchfully in prayer.

Further. Thou wilt be much strengthened in this holy work, if thou exercisest strict caution in respect to two things particularly. The first is, be careful to *search out* and *pull down* all the *idols* that are in thine heart; and beware of *setting any of them up again*. God hath told thee in a very solemn manner, that He will not be "inquired of by thee," if thou comest to Him with idols; and that if He answer thy prayer at all, He will "answer thee according to thy idols."[1] For how shouldst thou expect that God will share his temple with a filthy idol? Did not Dagon fall down before the ark as soon as it was brought into his house?[2] And shall not all the sinful affections of thy heart give place to the most Holy God, when He comes to thee by his Spirit, and takes up his abode with thee? Thou must watch and pray very constantly, and very searchingly, against these heart-idols. There will be always *a party within thee*, ready to set up any Dagon, or Ashtaroth, or Baal, in his place again; and if they succeed, if thou art brought to entertain but *one* idol, yea, if

[1] Ezek. xiv. 3, 4. [2] 1 Sam. v. 3.

thou lookest with satisfaction even upon the *limb* of an idol, thou wilt be made to find it out and feel it. Farewell, then, to thy *light* and *comfort*—farewell to thy *strength* and *victories*—farewell to all that confers *happiness*, or promotes *success*, amidst the difficulties and dangers of a Christian's life. God will "cover Himself with a cloud,"[1] a cloud raised by thy sin; and no prayer of thine will penetrate it. And this will continue *till the idol is given up and broken in pieces.* So jealous is the Lord God about this matter, and so immediately doth He visit with righteous punishment any heart-idolatry, that whenever thou findest things not going well with thee,—that thy prayers speed not at the throne of grace, or that thou art getting weaker instead of stronger, thou needest not doubt but that there is a cause. Forthwith begin with prayer for light and help from above, a determined search after the idols which infest the heart; and in most cases thou wilt find one. Thou wilt discover, either that thou art still longing after some *forbidden object*, or still refusing to give up some pleasure or pursuit which is *not consistent with thy profession*;—still, in fact, loving something which interferes with

[1] Lam. iii. 44.

the *complete devotedness* of thy love to God. When that idol is *detected* and *destroyed*, thou mayst hope for peace and strength again; and *not before*. And most astonishing is the mercy that forgives these foul idolatries, and even bids us come for grace to be cleansed of the very pollutions which they have caused within us!

My next caution to thee is, beware of an UNCOLLECTED SCATTERED STATE OF MIND. Little is the mischief which lurks in this state suspected even by those who desire to live to God. It is a most important consideration, that there is no such thing as a mind *absolutely unemployed*. The mind is always at work, either for evil or for good: and when thou considerest *what* the natural heart is, as the Searcher of hearts describes it,[1] thou canst not but see *how* it will be employed, if left to itself, and how needful it must be to "keep it with all diligence."[2] The mind which suffers its thoughts to rise and roam uncontrolled, without any purpose or object, will soon fall into a very sad and sinful condition. It will resemble that field or garden, the gates of which are constantly left open; so that every passing trespasser and plunderer may enter in and spoil. *Vain ima-*

[1] Gen. viii. 21; also Jer. xvii. 9. [2] Prov. iv. 23.

ginations, *idle*, *foolish*, *corrupt*, *and corrupting thoughts* will swarm over such a mind like locusts, and will commit ravages not easy to be repaired. Need I say this is a state fatal to a *spirit of prayer?* fatal to *communion with God?* A man, habitually or even frequently in this mind, is walking *away from* God rather than walking *with* Him. Thou canst not expect the Holy Spirit to abide with thee if thou entertainest Him with such company as this. Is not this making the heart which He hath chosen for his temple "*a cage of every unclean bird?*" and may it not be feared that the Lord will finally *depart*, as He did from his *polluted* house at Jerusalem, and never return to it again? Christian Villager, thy remedy will be to make it a principle of thy daily life to *call thyself to an account for thy thoughts*;—to demand of thyself, from time to time, *what* thou art thinking about. And take care that thy mind, even when it is not regularly following out a course of religious meditation, is at all events *usefully* employed. Accustom thyself to have some good *purpose* or *reason*, for thy thoughts as well as thy conversation. Thou wilt at length get the mastery over thy mind by thus disciplining it; and, for this exer-

cise, thou mayest depend on receiving assistance from Him who alone can command the unruly heart and will. By his grace thou wilt do much in shutting out or driving away evil thoughts, and in maintaining, for the most part, a succession of good ones. And whenever thou findest thyself slipping into the state which I have been speaking of,—either not thinking at all, so far as thou art conscious of it, or thinking of nothing that is profitable, instantly take alarm, and *summon thy thoughts home*. Bethink thee of thy holy calling. Recollect thou art in the divine presence. Recover thy better frame by returning to God in prayer.

And here I would strongly recommend to thee the practice of *ejaculatory prayer*. Ejaculatory prayer is prayer darted up, quick as an arrow, to God. This is a mode of prayer admirably suited to the condition of the Christian, while he is yet in the flesh, and in the midst of perils. One word, as thou knowest, may be a prayer, yea, even half a word. Prayer may be expressed in a broken cry, in a hurried glance, in a breath, or in a wish. Now, by this kind of prayer which is called ejaculatory, thou wilt be able to hold frequent and rapid

communication with thy heavenly Father. Wouldst thou quicken thy heart when it is dull and cold; wouldst thou fetch down assistance when thou art perplexed by difficulties, or overborne by foes; wouldst thou obtain refreshment when thou art weary, comfort when thou art sad, heavenliness of spirit when thou art earthly-minded; this will be the most effectual means which thou canst adopt to procure those blessings. Thou mayest observe many instances of this mode of praying in the lives of different saints in the Scriptures, and particularly in the life of Nehemiah, and the life and Psalms of David. Learn how to practise it from those holy men. The Psalms will furnish thee with an inexhaustible supply of ejaculatory prayers, some of which will always come seasonably to thee. Give thyself to the study of the sentiments which they contain, and the petitions which they put up, till thy mind is cast, as it were, into the very mould of the devout Psalmist's. I would also suggest to thee to try, occasionally, the effect of uttering in thy heart some such familiar ejaculations as these,—"Hallowed be thy name"—or again, "Thy kingdom come"—or again, "Thy will be done; done in earth as it is in heaven!"

Expand these petitions, as thou utterest them and apply them to thyself. Let thy heart fervently express in the first,—"O God! may thy holy name be hallowed in every way, by every human being, but *especially by me*, in thought, word, and action, every hour." In the second petition, let it be thy earnest desire, that the kingdom of God may speedily be set up all over this sinful world—particularly in thy beloved country—still more in the hearts of thy dear kindred and friends—and *most of all in thy own heart;* casting down all that there opposes it, and bringing every faculty and affection into constant and loving obedience. Many a time also mayest thou silence a rebellious wish, or a rising murmur, by devoutly uttering that forcible little ejaculation, "Thy will be done,"—"done on earth as it is in heaven—as willingly, as universally, as constantly, and as well—done *by me too, especially;* by me in *every* thing; by me NOW."

I have only set before thee these two or three specimens of ejaculatory prayer, because they will be sufficient to shew thee how thou mayst convert to thy use the most familiar prayers; and how much *meaning* may be expressed even in the shortest and simplest peti-

tion. And thou mayst avail thyself of this mode of praying for all thy spiritual purposes, Art thou receiving a blessing of any kind?—thou mayst break forth into some ejaculatory thanksgiving. Art thou bowed down by a heavy cross!—thou mayst apply for an increase of strength and patience in some ejaculatory petition. Are temptations overpowering thee, or art thou suddenly placed in trying circumstances?—thou mayst instantly make known thy case in some ejaculatory cry. Is thy heart filled with sorrow and fear on account of sin? thou mayst pour out its feelings before God in some ejaculatory confession. In short, wheresoever thou art, and whatever thy condition, this is a means of grace open to thee at all times; and God will assuredly bless it to thy service because it is one of his own appointing. Nay, thy great Master himself hath left thee also the strongest reasons for practising it, in his own instructive *example*. He often had recourse to ejaculatory prayer.

As another help to thee in maintaining a prayerful state of soul, I will now put down one or two important considerations, which ought to press powerfully upon the mind of every Christian.

For instance—Consider, that "*in the midst of life we are in death.*" This very day now passing over thee may possibly be thy *last.* Thou shouldst work, therefore, while it is day; and thou shouldst so live, as if thou hadst reason to expect it would be indeed thy last day. How much is comprehended in this! What a frame of spirit, what a filling up of duties, what a preparedness of mind, both as regards leaving this world and entering the other, does it imply!

Again. Consider, *thou hast to meet God at night.* Consider, that the main business of that solemn interview will be to *review the way in which thou hast spent the day.* Oh! how much of folly and sin mayst thou avoid, how many benefits mayst thou experience during the day, if thou wouldst constantly keep thy mind under the power of such a consideration as this!

Once more. Consider that thou hast *many talents of various kinds intrusted to thee*—that thy Lord expects thee to occupy with them in his service—and that thy reward hereafter will be proportioned to thy diligence in the use of them in this life. There is a manifold influence in this consideration,—an influence of wholesome fear, and warm desire, and joyful

hope, which ought to rouse and animate thee in the duties of thy daily life. I trust thou wilt meditate on it, and on the others which I have named, and derive much benefit from them. The secret of a life of faith and prayer lies much in the observance of such things as these.

Before I conclude, Christian Villager, I should say one word to thee on the subject of regular prayer at *stated times* of the day. The time of morning and evening I need not mention, because all persons acknowledge the duty of praying then; but I wish to impress upon thee the *necessity* and the *comfort* of going regularly to God *in the middle of the day*. Do not in any wise neglect this. Do not consider any occasional devotions a substitute for it. Solemnly meet thy God at noon, that thou mayst have his noontide blessing, and get spiritual renewal for the rest of the day. Even if thou art surrounded by companions from whom thou canst not conveniently make thy escape, thou wilt find it practicable to retire *inwardly* with God. He will certainly bless thy effort to do so, and manifest Himself to thee by the influences of his Holy Spirit. He can make to thee an inward solitude in the

midst of the busiest crowd. He can understand the converse of thy *heart*, however little thou mayst say to Him with the outward lip. Believe me, thou wilt find this noontide interview very profitable in many ways. Often mayst thou *then* repair some begun spiritual mischief, and set out again better prepared for duty. Often may it prove to thee a means of calling thee off from the world, of leading thee to solemn reflections, and lifting thee up to those holy heights on which thy soul should be ever walking. And further, the spending of even a few minutes at such a time in real, lively communion with God, may prove an important blessing to thy companions in labour. To say nothing of their witnessing thy seriousness of mind and thoughtfulness, the spirit which God may shed over thee, may give such a character to thy demeanour, and such a turn to thy conversation as may, by his blessing, win them to the love of religion themselves. Thou mayst be the happy instrument of leading them to Jesus for eternal life.

Lastly, I need scarcely add, return to thy house as thou wentest out of it, PRAYING. Having *gone forth* with God, and having *kept* with God through the day, thou mayst expect

to have the privilege of *coming back* with Him. And most welcome wilt thou be, in such company and under such protection, to thy dear wife and little ones. When thou and they sit together once more round the blessed Bible, the book of family comfort and happiness, or kneel together before the throne of grace, to unite in family prayer and praise, great will be the benefit which they as well as thyself will experience from thy having walked so closely with God throughout the day. Thou wilt come to them, as did Moses to the Israelites from the mount, with thy face shining. The warmth and cheerfulness of true religion will be shed over thy soul, and will evidence itself in thy manner. The Lord will be with thee. He will provide thee with sacred fire to kindle thy evening sacrifice. Thou mayst have the delightful satisfaction of seeing the fervour of thy own spirit communicated to all around thee. Thou wilt thus experience another blessed proof of the abounding grace and love of God; and of his faithfulness in rewarding, acording to his promise, them that diligently seek Him.

And now, Christian Villager, hear my last words upon this great subject.

I have endeavoured to shew thee, according

to my poor ability, first, that it is necessary for every child of God to *live in a spirit of prayer;* secondly, *in what living in prayer consists;* and thirdly, that a life of prayer is *a life of inestimable privilege.* May God bless the endeavour to thy edification and his own glory!

I trust thou seest clearly now the *true character* of prayer—that it is not merely the occasional utterance of the lip, but an *inward, living, active principle*—a state of *loving dependence* upon God, as a reconciled Father, and of *constant fellowship* with him through the Son, and by the Holy Ghost. Yes, prayer is the breath, the life, the strength, the happiness of a truly regenerate soul. Prayer is the highest and holiest employment of which the mind is capable. Prayer is close converse and communion with the Deity himself—converse which He alone can fit a creature for; and converse which increasingly changes him who partakes of it, into the very nature and image of the blessed God. In prayer thou art to practise that great principle of *living out of thyself in another.* Thou art not only to have thy being but the *actings* of thy being, and the *enjoyment* of thy being, in the eternal Jehovah. In a word, prayer is the *mode* or *manner* in

which a Christian *lives* in this world. He will live in a different mode in the next. What he must *ask* for, and *hope* for now, he will have and enjoy without asking then. Faith will be exchanged for sight. He will converse with God face to face. He will not have to wait and watch for the divine presence, and for the communication of that grace or virtue by which he will live: but he will be *ever* before God, rejoicing in the *actual perception* of being so; and the grace by which he will live will be conveyed to him unceasingly and immediately from God himself; without the fear of his forfeiting it by disobedience, or losing it by neglect. In the mean time, however, it is an appointment and provision of the gospel covenant, that all these things should be accomplished and received through the means of prayer.

Christian Villager! be resolved, I once more charge thee, be resolved, by God's grace, to attain this exalted state, and not to be content with any thing short of it. Neither be shaken in spirit, or turned aside from thy path, by any discouragements which thou mayst meet with. These thou must be prepared for, because they belong to thy present state; and Satan would

furnish them if they come from no other quarter. Do not, therefore, expect everything at once. Thou hast much to learn, both of thyself and of God, before thou art meet for heaven; and God will teach thee largely out of the book of *experience*. Pant and pursue after Christian perfection: but do not forget that thou art still in the flesh—that thou hast still "a law in thy members warring against the law of thy better mind." That which is perfect is to come. Nothing will be unmixed, nothing will be complete, till thou and thy corrupt nature are parted by death never to unite again. In the mean time, it is thy privilege, as a Christian, if thou art a Christian indeed, to stand up in the midst of thy corruptions and sins—to stand up surrounded by the guilty memorials of broken idols, and full of the recollection of unnumbered shortcomings and misdoings—yea, to stand up, consciously, in the very presence of the heart-searching God, and, notwithstanding all this, *to be in a state of perfect peace*. This is the full triumph of Christian faith. This is a just appropriation of the boundless grace of the gospel. This is an entire dependence upon Christ, his blood and

righteousness, for complete and final justification.

Humbled indeed, humbled to the dust, and ashamed, and contrite wilt thou feel, when thou lookest at thyself,—what thou hast been, and what thou still art at best. Thy inmost soul, thy conscience, thy every faculty, and feeling, will cry, "Guilty, guilty!" On the other hand, the consideration that thou art before a God now fully reconciled to thee—a God whose nature and name are love—a God that hath forgiven thee freely and for ever—a God that gave his own Son to die for thee and for many, that He might exercise his mercy, and magnify his justice at the same time—a God that hath graciously pledged Himself to provide for all thy necessities; this may well impart to thee a peace and a confidence that will keep thee undismayed and happy. Cherish such a faith as this; it will "remove mountains." Look to thy blessed Saviour for it, and make Him its *sole foundation.* "The promises of God are all yea and Amen in Him."[1] My last words shall direct thee to Him. Remember, Christian Villager, that all-comprehensive declaration, that "Christ is all, and in all."[2]

[1] 2 Cor. i. 20. [2] Col. iii. 11.

ABOUT THE BRINGING UP OF CHILDREN.

"THE PROMISE IS UNTO YOU, AND TO YOUR CHILDREN."—ACTS II. 39.

"SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT."—MARK X. 14.

"FATHERS, PROVOKE NOT YOUR CHILDREN TO WRATH; BUT BRING THEM UP IN THE NURTURE AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD."—EPH. VI. 4.

"TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO; AND WHEN HE IS OLD, HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT."—PROV. XXII. 6.

"AND THESE WORDS, WHICH I COMMAND THEE THIS DAY, THOU SHALT TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY UNTO THY CHILDREN."—DEUT. VI. 6, 7.

"CORRECT THY SON, AND HE SHALL GIVE THEE REST; YEA, HE SHALL GIVE DELIGHT UNTO THY SOUL."—PROV. XXIX. 17.

"HE THAT SPARETH HIS ROD HATETH HIS SON: BUT HE THAT LOVETH HIM CHASTENETH HIM BETIMES."—PROV. XIII. 24.

"I REJOICED GREATLY THAT I FOUND OF THY CHILDREN WALKING IN TRUTH."—2 JOHN 4.

HAST thou children, Christian Villager? then

remember they are both a *gift*[1] and a *trust* from God. Take heed that thou neither abuse the gift nor prove unfaithful to the trust. Herein will be a great trial of thy grace and faith,—probably, one of the greatest which thou wilt have in this life. Thou wilt not only have to watch and struggle against thine own misleading heart, but against the power of evil *example* all around thee. And this evil example thou wilt meet with in quarters where least of all it should be found. It is a serious and painful fact that, in these times, the great majority of parents among the poorer classes, and even those making *a regular profession of religion*, do most sinfully neglect the duty of bringing up their children in the fear of God. In this matter, Christian Villager, "we speak that we do *know*, and testify that we have *seen*." And the consequences of this parental sin return with heavy but just retribution upon the heads of the guilty parents. We have seen these neglectful parents quite unable to manage their children, even long before they have got beyond a state of childhood; and we have seen these neglected children the scourge and misery of those to whom, under God, they

[1] Psa. cxxvii. 3.

owed their being, and of whom they ought to have been the comfort and the stay throughout their lives. Never, perhaps, did any generation present so many instances, among grown-up children, *of a want of natural affection and kind consideration for their parents*, as our generation doth. But this undutiful and unnatural conduct is just the fruit which must be expected from the way in which most children, among the poorer classes, are now brought up. Truly extraordinary and sinful is the mismanagement which prevails. It would seem to any one entering a cottage in which a family is found, that each child is permitted to do, for the most part, just what is right in the sight of his own eyes. There is no regular exercise of *authority*, and, therefore, there is no *obedience*. There are no *rules*, and, therefore, no *order*. The whims and wishes of the children are consulted rather than their real good. They are spoken to as though they were *their own masters*, and they soon get to act as their own masters. And so self-willed and intractable is the spirit which thus grows up in them, and so glaringly wrong the course adopted by the parents, that it is difficult to say which is the most trying to witness. If a

child is commanded to do anything, it is quite a chance whether he obeys, and if he disobeys, it is a chance whether he is punished. And, on the other hand, it not unfrequently happens, when some child hath given more than usual provocation by his mischief or obstinacy, and the angry parent gives way to temper, that the *sinful manner* of the parent's *punishment* is worse than the sin of the child's offence.

But I shall give thee a few specimens of the way in which children are commonly dealt with.

Let us take the case of a child a few years old who is doing something that is wrong. Now, possibly, he is told not to be doing this; and if that fail, perhaps coaxing is resorted to —and it may be, if he obstinately persists in his mischief, that he is even peremptorily commanded to stop. But now, what takes place? Doth it follow that the little offender *attends* to the voice of his parent, and *obeys?* By no means, he may or he may not; but the thing which I wish thee to notice is, that if he does not attend to what is said to him, he is often *left to have his own way and go on!* Here, then, thou seest an opportunity of *teaching the great duty of obedience* sinfully neglected. And,

what is worse, here is *a cruel, cruel help given to the power of sin in that poor child's soul.*

But let us take another case.

A child is bidden to go to school. Now, this often produces a cry. The child is unwilling to go. The parent, true to the course of mismanagement, begins to *coax* or to *bribe.* Well, the child still lingers. The parent begins to threaten and to scold, but in vain. The child hates school, has no proper notions about the *duty* of going, and will not comply. Now, then, is the struggle. Now is the time of *standing up for God.* Now is the time for teaching that most important and simple principle, that children must obey a parent's command *because* it is a parent's command. But how ends the scene? Why, many a time, it ends, as thou knowest too well, in the child's being suffered to steal off with some fellow-offenders and fellow-truants to play, and there is no going to school on that day! Need I ask thee, Christian Villager, who is the *chief sinner* here?

Once more. Suppose a child hath been punished at school for something wrong,—lateness, or idleness, or bad behaviour of any kind. Well, this naughty and chastised child

goes home, makes a great piece of work to his parents about his *punishment*, but says very little, and probably that little falsely, about his *offence*. And now, what is the course adopted? I blush to tell it, but not unfrequently the parents forthwith *take part with the child in his misconduct!* The young rebel is *encouraged* in his rebelliousness! *He* is in the right, and the *master*, or *mistress*, aye, perhaps *the minister himself*, is in the wrong! He is *not to go to school again!* And thus the poor child is, at this early period of life, taught to "call evil good and good evil." Thus his young and tender conscience gets corrupted and hardened. Self-will and obstinacy grow up in him apace. His neck becomes "an iron sinew, and his brow brass." School law being thus successfully trampled upon, and there being no law at home, contempt and transgression of the *laws of his country* seem to follow, as he grows older, as a matter of course, and frequently he is ruined for both worlds. And, observe, *the principal actors, the guiltiest parties in this work of death are the Parents! the Parents! the Parents!*

Oh! ye village mothers, where is your love to your ill-used offspring?—where is your fear

of the God that gave them to you? Is it come to this, that ye will act in *wilfulness* the part which the disciples once acted in *ignorance?* Will ye, when the minister calls upon you in Christ's name, to "suffer the little children to come" to Christ, by sending them regularly to school, where they may learn his way, will ye be the ones to *forbid* them, and *keep them back* from Him? Know ye not that God hath a *property* in your children? and that ye yourselves owned, and set your seal to that, when ye presented them to Him in holy baptism? And think ye that He will not charge you, as He did Israel of old, with offering up HIS children to a worse God than Molech, and bringing them into peril of a fire unspeakably more terrible than any which man can kindle?[1] But, perchance, thou deceivest thyself, cruel mother, with the self-flattering notion, that thou art too fond, too soft-hearted, to hear thy child cry when he is chastised, or when he is denied anything that is not good for him? I ask thee, then, how thou wilt bear his cry, shouldst thou, as is not unlikely, be doomed to hear it, and know it but too well,

[1] Ezek. xvi. 21. "Thou hast slain *my* children," &c. See also Jer. xxxii. 35.

among the cries of tormented thousands in the pit of hell? Is it not enough that thou hast given him an evil nature, but must thou *cherish* it by *indulgence*, or let it *strengthen* by *neglect*? Callest thou this indulgence *love*, and this neglect *fondness*? The true and righteous God calls it by its proper name, and that is, HATRED.[1]

Oh! ye Village Mothers, be warned, and repent of this now almost universal sin. I speak more particularly to you, though I speak to Fathers likewise. As mothers, ye have the chief charge of the children in their tender years. They are more about you—more dependent on you. And ye will find in Scripture, that a child who hath turned out wicked, by reason of neglect in his bringing up, though he is a pain and disgrace to *both* his parents, yet "bringeth his *mother* especially to heaviness and shame."[2] Oh! hasten, hasten to retrace your steps, if your poor children are not already beyond your management. If they are, (though I would not have you too hasty to judge this to be the case, provided they are still *young in years*,) but if they are beyond your management by

[1] Prov. xiii. 24. "He that spareth his rod *hateth* his son."
[2] Prov. xxix. 15; also xvii. 25, and x. 1.

reason of their *age*, then *take the matter without delay before God, in earnest unceasing prayer.* Prayer can do what nothing else can. Prayer may bring down power that will soften and subdue even a rebellious child. And forget not, neglectful and unhappy parent, that *thou too* art a rebellious child; of larger growth, and therefore of *greater guilt.* Return to thy offended Father, and *acknowledge* all thy sin. The breaking of thy own heart may prove the means of breaking the heart of thy poor child; but, however that may be, repent and become dutiful thyself. There *is* grace in Christ, by which thou mayest obtain forgiveness for even such sin as thine.

And now, Christian Villager, I shall proceed to give thee a few general instructions, which may be useful to guide thee in thy parental duties.

First. Ever keep in mind, that thy child inherits from thee, who art thyself a fallen and sinful being, a *nature* with which he *cannot enter heaven.*[1]

Secondly. That, as long as he is in this natural state, he is *at enmity with God,*[2] and that he must needs go on, in darkness and

[1] Psa. li. 5, and Eph. ii. 3. [2] Rom. viii. 7.

hardness of heart, sinning against God, and destroying his precious soul.

Thirdly. That *divine grace alone* can change him; and that this grace is to be had freely by all who sincerely seek it through Jesus Christ.

Let these considerations lead thee to present thy child to God, so soon as may be, in holy baptism; that he may, without delay, be put in possession of the inestimable privileges of the gospel covenant. But see thou make not his baptism *a mere form*. Let the Sureties thou choosest be people of God; that thy child may have the benefit of their *prayers* and *example*, and that God may not be provoked at his own ordinance, by thy bringing any persons to be parties to it, *who do not, themselves, love and obey Him*. And prayerfully carry out the objects and intents of baptism by giving him a *baptismal education*; that is, an education *answering* to the promises and vows made for him, and the benefits covenanted to him, in that holy sacrament. Thou wilt have to teach him diligently his great baptismal *privileges*, and his solemn baptismal *engagements*; and at the same time thou wilt have to shew him the utter need of Christ's grace, to *enable* him to keep any of the

latter, and of Christ's blood and merits, to *procure* for him any of the former.

Begin his education *from the cradle*; for begin when thou wilt, *sin* will be at work before thee; and the devil knows the value of sowing his seed betimes.

Follow God's precept to the Jews, and *talk* much with thy child about the great and blessed truths of redemption.[1] More mighty works and wonders have been done for thee and for thy little ones, than ever were done for the Israelites in Egypt; and neither thou nor they can talk of them too much.

Be much *in prayer* for thy child; and, occasionally, pray *with* him. He will then not only see thy loving anxiety for his welfare, but he will learn of thee *how* to pray. Great benefits have been known to come from this custom, according to the testimony of pious parents.

Never *rest* in the means which thou usest, however numerous or excellent: but remember, they are still but *means*. They are appointed *conveyances* of grace, but not *grace itself*; and their efficacy depends entirely on the sovereign grace of God. Thou must not be content, therefore, with bringing up thy child in religion, but

[1] Deut. vi. 7, 20–24; also Exod. xii. 26, 27.

thou must watch and wait to see *religion brought up in him.*

As regards the *management* of thy children, this, of course, must be adapted to the disposition, temper, character, and age of each. Thou wilt need much prudence and watchfulness herein: but this thou must diligently ask of God.

Teach thy child, *from the very first*, that he is to do everything which thou biddest him, *because* thou biddest him. This is quite reason enough for him. He is not to call thee to account for thy proceedings; neither is he qualified to judge what is good for him. If thou actest upon this simple principle from his early childhood, it will save thee much trouble, and him many tears.

If thou hast a child *froward* and *headstrong*, thou must be proportionately *watchful*, *firm*, and *steady*, in thy management of him. And take care to curb and govern him *from his infancy*. Thou mayst do something with a *young* lion: but if thou let him come to his strength, untamed, what canst thou expect from him but violence and mischief?

Take care and have thy authority *respected*; and always *carry out* thy instructions and admonitions. Thou must go further than old

Eli with his *useless reproofs*, when he had full authority to *act* and *punish*. Thou must copy Abraham, and "*command* thy children after thee,"[1] at least, so long as they are in youthful years. It is better not to speak at all than to speak without being *attended to*.

With thy rule of making *thy word law* upon all occasions, join that of *taking God's law for thy word*; and then thou wilt seldom go wrong.

Be *firm* in thy punishments, but not *passionate*. For this reason thou shouldst avoid correcting when thou art *in anger*. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Angry blows and violent words are not likely to bring thy children to *love religion*, or to *hate sin*.

Be particular about *little* transgressions, and check the *very first beginnings* of evil. Remember, it is not the thing which is done so much as the *principle which is violated* in these small matters, that is to be considered. The plucking of one dry stick from a hedge, and bringing it home to burn, *without leave from the owner*, trifling as is the value of the article, is an act of *great sin*. Such an act contains in it a *contempt for the laws of the eternal God*, who forbids steal-

[1] Gen. xviii. 19.

ing—a *breach of the Christian rule of* "*loving thy neighbour as thyself*—and a *disregard to the sufferings and death of the blessed Redeemer*, who bore the pains of these iniquities "in his own body on the tree." Christian Villager, *remember this!*

Finally, always set thy child *a good example.* This will go farther with him than the strongest precept. He will forget what he hears thee teach, to imitate what he sees thee *do.* On this account, thou wilt have the greatest need to watch thy spirit, thy words, and thy actions at all times. Let thy child see *by thy daily life*, that thou truly fearest God, and delightest in his service. Let him hear the name of Jesus, and the things which he hath done and suffered for poor sinners, often coming from thy lips with feelings of deepest love and gratitude. Let him behold thee happy in religion, and unhappy out of it. Let him have constant proof of thy indifference to worldly things, and of thy abhorrence of all manner of sin. In short, let thy walk be so conformable to the gospel rule, that thou mayst say to thy child, as the apostle said to his spiritual children,[1]—"Follow thy father, as he follows Christ."

And now, when thou hast steadily and prayer-

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 1.

fully used these means, and pursued this course with thy child, thou mayst quietly leave the *issue* with Almighty God. Thou hast got the *gospel promise*—let that carry thee through all thy endeavours, and comfort thee under all thy cares about him. The *great point* has been attended to—thou hast "trained him up in the way in which he should go."[1] Thou mayst, therefore, confidently hope, even against a succession of discouragements, that, sooner or later, thou shalt see him walking in it. Yea, even if he should disappoint thy hopes, and wound thy heart for years, by wandering from the path of God, thou mayst still maintain thy faith and animate thy prayers by recalling those comforting words,—"when he is old, he will not depart from it."

[1] Prov. xxii. 6.

ABOUT CLOTHING CLUBS AND FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."—1 Tim. v. 8.

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men."—Rom. xii. 17.

"The hand of the diligent maketh rich."—Prov. x. 4.

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."—Eph. v. 11.

"Neither be partaker of other men's sins."—1 Tim. v. 22.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—1 Cor. x. 31.

To *prevent* is better than to *cure;* and these Clubs will help thee in two ways. First, they will help thee to keep out of debt; and next, to get lawful and valuable increase on thy little savings. Herein thou mayest adorn thy Christian profession, and hereby thou wilt most likely escape many things which would be temptations and mischiefs to thy soul. God

bids thee learn to be *provident* from the wise little ant :[1] and in proportion as thou art so, the testimony of thy own conscience, and the gladness of the face of thy wife and thy little ones, will be a rich reward. By all means, therefore, pay into a Clothing Club if thou hast the opportunity; and be sure thou steadily keepest up thy payments. It is paying *regularly* that makes it come easy; for he that gets behind-hand has not only double ground to fetch up, but he has double temptation to grow slack. Make, then, a conscience of *regularity*. It is in little matters like these that a Christian shews himself, even more than in great ones. For, to be particular in small duties, betokens a *watchfulness* of mind, and the exercise of a *principle*. This is one of the hopeful signs that thy footsteps are "ordered in God's Word;" and that the good government of his kingdom is set up in that Babel within thee,—thine own heart. And, in the midst of all, forget not to be *thankful*. Thank God for the blessing of a Clothing Club. Depend on it, we shall all find out many things hereafter for which we never remembered to be thankful.

As regards Friendly Societies, I dare say thou wilt be ready of thyself to join one. But

[1] Prov. vi. 6.

here I must put thee on thy guard. Art thou a Christian indeed? Then, as thou fearest God, and art jealous of grieving the Holy Spirit, and valuest thy soul's peace, take heed what thou hast to do with the *common Benefit Societies*. Their custom of holding monthly meetings at the public house—*a place where the wicked love to resort;* and generally too on the eve of the Lord's Day—*a time when every man ought rather to be preparing for the holy rest of the Sabbath*; this, and their way, commonly, of spending their annual feast-day, are things more calculated to draw down the *displeasure*, than to obtain the *blessing*, of the Almighty. I do not think thou canst join thyself to a Club of this sort, without a great risk of dishonouring thy Master by bringing a stain upon his gospel. Nay, I am not sure, that thou canst do it without being likely to incur the guilt of being a "*partaker of other mens' sins.*"[1] But I am sure of this—that if it be in thy power to join any Friendly Society,[2] in which there are no meetings at the public house, and no sinful revellings at an annual feast, thou art bound by every consideration of duty to thy Lord, and of re-

[1] 1 Tim. v. 22.

[2] In many Counties there are "County Friendly Societies," which have none of the bad rules or customs above mentioned.

gard to the good of thy family and thy own soul, to join that Society before any of the other sort. This is the way to obtain the *blessing of God upon thy savings.* This is "providing things honest in the sight of all men." Thou wilt use the money which is thus supplied, whenever it may please God to lay thee upon a sick or dying bed, *without any guilty recollections of things which accompanied the getting of it.*

But supposing, Christian Villager, thou art already a member of one of the common Clubs when my words come to thee, then I charge thee manfully to *bear witness* against all their bad rules and ungodly practices. *This is the only way in which thou canst clear thy own conscience.* For, as a Christian, thou art to carry thy principles, and "walk worthy of the Lord,"[1] wherever thou goest. The gospel rule is, *avoid* the company of evil men:[2] but if thou art compelled to go amongst them, then take care, in some way or other to *rebuke* their sin.[3] For, "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"[4] and why shouldst thou run the risk of having it said to thee, "Thy money perish with thee?"

[1] Col. i. 10. [2] Prov. iv. 14.
[3] Lev. xix. 17. [4] 2 Cor. vi. 14.

ABOUT KEEPING OUT OF DEBT AND PAYING DEBTS.

"OWE NO MAN ANYTHING."—ROM. XIII. 8.
"RENDER TO ALL THEIR DUES."—ROM. XIII. 7.

CHRISTIAN Villager, as thou art to be a man "who adorns the doctrines"[1] of the gospel with a life suitable to them—a man whose "light so shines before the world, that others, seeing thy good works, may thereby be led to glorify thy Father which is in heaven,"[2]—it is not for thee to be getting into debt, or, at all events, quietly to continue in it. Thou shouldst make a solemn determination, in dependence on thy Saviour's promised grace, that thou wilt keep the good precept of the Apostle, and "owe no man anything," but to love him. In order to this, thou shouldst never suffer thyself to run up a debt, which thou art not sure thou wilt be able to pay within a reasonable time. Thou wilt have strong temptations to struggle against,

[1] Tit. ii. 10. [2] Matt. v. 16.

but I warn thee to stand firm. I have seen too often, and so, no doubt, hast thou, the bad consequences of going upon a system of *trust*, both to the buyer and the seller. I could tell thee of not a few cases of poor men made dishonest and miserable for life, and of little shopkeepers half ruined by this ill-judged practice.

But, Christian Villager, what if thou art already entangled in debt, when my words come to thee? What, if thou hast been led into it, without thought at first, either by the custom of the village, or because it was convenient to thyself? Why, I tell thee, if this is the case, *now is the time* to give proof of thy *sincerity* as a Christian—now is the opportunity to manifest thy love of *truth* and *uprightness*—now mayest thou shew plainly, that thou walkest *in the fear of God*, and hast courage to deny thyself anything, and to do anything, rather than *wrong thy neighbour*, or *disgrace thy holy profession*. Keep the eye steadily upon the Apostle's precept, "*Render unto all their dues.*" Remember also that great commandment, "*Thou shalt do unto others as thou wouldst they should do unto thee.*" Pray earnestly for divine grace, to enable thee to fulfil these duties by discharging thy lawful debts. Let it be understood

between thee and thy good wife, that thou hast *not got one spare penny to spend, till thou hast rendered to the shopkeeper all his due.* Thou must beware of being led in this matter by the *example* of those around thee. It is a sad and serious truth, that, in these times, many profess strict religion, who *never care to pay their lawful debts.* Nay, they will even quarrel with those who are faithful enough to tell them they are bound to do so! But need I ask thee or them, if there is to be found in the Bible any such description of character as a *dishonest Christian?* Doth not the whole stream of Christian *duty*, and Christian *feeling*, and Christian *practice*, run just the *other* way? And did not St Paul, the great Apostle, shew thee, that he would have slaved night and day rather than have been even burdensome to others, though he had every claim upon them, much less have defrauded them of their due? Ah! Christian Villager, there is something *very wrong* in the state of that man's soul, who can profess the gospel, and yet commit such an outrage upon it as this. Let my words sink deep into thy mind. I am jealous for the purity and uprightness of thy conduct—nay, I am affectionately desirous of thy soul's *peace*

and *welfare.* I fervently pray the blessed God, that He may preserve thee out of this dangerous snare—that He may give thee grace, either to keep out of debt for conscience sake; or grace, if thou hast incurred debts, to deny thyself, and make constant exertions, *until they are honestly paid.* It is a serious consideration, that, for every money-debt *wilfully* left unpaid in thy neighbour's book, there will be found *a sin-debt entered against thee in the book of God.*

ABOUT NOT GOING TO A PUBLIC HOUSE OR BEER SHOP.

"ENTER NOT INTO THE PATH OF THE WICKED, AND GO NOT IN THE WAY OF EVIL MEN."—PROV. IV. 14.

"BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT STANDETH NOT IN THE WAY OF SINNERS."—PSA. I. 1.

"I HAVE HATED THE CONGREGATION OF EVIL DOERS, AND WILL NOT SIT WITH THE WICKED."—PSA. XXVI. 5.

"GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD."—EPH. IV. 30.

"ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCE OF EVIL."—1 THESS. V. 22.

Is there a place where cursing, swearing, lying, quarrelling, and all manner of evil speaking, are as common as the air we breathe?—a place where the thief, the rogue, the vagabond, the drunkard, the gambler, the poacher, the profligate, the Sabbath-breaker, delight to meet?—a place where many a poor wife's heart is broken, children are beggared, fortunes ruined, happiness destroyed, and souls lost?—a place where God is hated, insulted, and defied?—where his

name is only used to make a curse, or back a lie, and where the name of Jesus is never named at all?—a place where men become devils, and where devils reign supreme?—a place that, perhaps, presents a picture more like to hell than any other place on earth?—that place is the drinking room of a PUBLIC HOUSE, BEER SHOP, or GIN SHOP!

Need I tell thee, Christian Villager, *thou* hast no business in such a place as this? I trust thou wouldst not have required a forbiddance: but the world is full of deceitful reasonings about these things, "refuges of lies;"—and many who are Christians by profession will go and sit down in beer shops. Be not thou one of these. I charge thee by all that is holy, to abstain from *entering* such a place, unless thou art absolutely compelled to do so; and then *never stop to drink.* This is the point which I wish to write upon thy conscience in letters deep and large—*never stop to drink.* This is the point wherein thou wilt shew whether thou dost sincerely abominate sin as God abominates it:—*never stop to drink.* If thou must purchase thy liquor, send for it, or take it to thy house—*never sit down to drink in a beer shop.*

Remember, thou art a CHRISTIAN! Let *this thought* keep thee, on every occasion, from going unnecessarily among wicked men, or into places which the wicked love. As a *Christian*, thou canst do nothing *unobserved*. Thou art *watched*, thou art *talked of*, thou art *judged*, as *other* men are not. As a Christian, thou canst do nothing that is *insignificant*—that is, nothing that is too trifling a matter to do either good or harm. In thy *every* word and action thou wilt *honour* or *dishonour* God; *adorn* or *sully* the purity of the Gospel; and *serve* or *injure* the cause of Christ. Thou canst do nothing whatever but it will work for good or for evil.

Let thy life and character, then, be strictly conformed to what Christ hath said of his people. As a witness for the truth, be *faithful*. As a light in a dark world, SHINE. As the salt[1] of a polluted earth, *keep thyself pure*. As one who has solemnly renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, *have nothing to do* with any practices by which those three great enemies of souls keep up their hateful dominion over them.

Oh! Christian Villager, I charge thee to make an unshaken stand here. Never approach the

[1] Matt. v. 13, 14.

Public House thyself, and do all thou canst to *keep others from it too.* Above all, tell the *professing Christian,* tell him affectionately, if thou seest him going that way, that, if he enter those doors, he will leave outside all that is dear to him—his Master, his fidelity, his love, his obedience, his purity, his peace. Warn him of the *beginnings* of evil—of the power of *bad example*—of the *difference* which *must* subsist between a disciple of Christ and a man of this world. And remind him of the thousands who have gone down in their drunken wickedness, disgrace, and misery, to *untimely graves.* Remind him of that scene which opens *beyond the deathbed.* Remind him of judgment and the everlasting fire. And tell thy guilty brother, that if there should be *any one particular word,* the very whisper of which in hell will produce a dreadful uproar of groans and curses, from thousands and tens of thousands of tormented souls, the name of *beer shop* or *gin shop,* is likely to be that word.

ABOUT SETTING APART SOMETHING

TO HELP TO SEND

MISSIONARIES AND BIBLES TO THE HEATHEN.

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men."—Gal. vi. 10.

"Freely ye have received, freely give."—Matt. x. 8.

"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase."—Prov. iii. 9.

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."—1 Cor. xvi. 2.

"How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?"—Rom. x. 14, 15.

"He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death."—James v. 20.

Dearly bought, wondrously saved Christian, dost thou *love* thy Saviour? Dost thou wish to

make him any *return* for his love, if such be in thy power? When thou prayest that thy father's "name may be hallowed," and that his "kingdom may come," art thou *sincere?* Having been dead and Christless thyself, hast thou a heart to *feel for* them that are dead and Christless too? Wouldst thou "do to others as thou wouldst they should do unto thee?" Hast thou the spirit of the blessed angels, who feel compassionate regard, and do ready service for poor sinners? And is it thy mind, as it is thy Master's,[1] that not all the things which the world contains can be put in the balance against the worth of one precious soul?

THEN, thou wilt not be backward to throw thy mite, from time to time, into the Redeemer's treasury. Nor is this a *tax* upon thee, but a *privilege* for thee. The Almighty God hath no need of thy help: but He invites thee to work under Him, and with Him, for *thine own sake.* For, to send forth the blessed gospel, is part of *the work of his kingdom* upon earth; and all the "children of the kingdom" join in this work, not only because it is their Lord's will, and carries its own blessing along with it, but also because it hastens the coming of his *glorious* kingdom; when all nations shall know

[1] Matt. xvi. 26.

and love Him, and there shall be no more sin, and no more sorrow. In this work, therefore, thou art to put forth and exercise the Christian graces; for it is a "work of *faith*," and a "labour of *love*." Herein thou mayst testify thy *trust in the gospel promises*; thy *zeal for the Redeemer's glory*; thy *compassion for a lost world*; and thy desire to contribute, so far as in thee lies, to *drive away wickedness and misery* from the earth. Neither is it the *least* important consideration, that herein thou hast good opportunity to overcome that hateful *selfishness* which makes thee and all of us so *unlike* to God.

As concerns the *amount* of thy offering, this of course must depend upon thy *means*. Thou art not expected, as a villager, to give largely. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not;"[1] and in this service, as in every other, "the Lord looketh on the *heart*."[2] But never were the opportunities of making small things great, and feeble endeavours strong, so numerous or so effectual as they are in these times. By means of the Religious Societies thou mayst stretch out thine hand across the seas, and help to station a Missionary, or dis-

[1] 2 Cor. viii. 12. [2] 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

tribute Bibles, on almost every shore. Consider, then, these opportunities, as so many doors *opened to thee by Providence.* Listen to the cry of, "Come and help us," from millions of awakened or awakening Heathens; and in it hear the voice of God, *bidding thee to do what thou canst to save them.* Cheerfully lay thy little weekly or monthly gift upon the altar, and accompany it with earnest affectionate *prayer.* Speak *frequently* to God in behalf of those dying souls to whom thou sendest thy humble help. Neither forget the hard-working, self-denying *Missionary.* Be assured, he needs thy prayers; for he is far from his native land and dearest friends, often in danger, and always more or less in suffering. Thou knowest not how much even thou mayst have the privilege of strengthening his hands, and cheering his heart, and prospering his work, by bringing down upon him, *in answer to thy prayers*, the almighty Spirit of his God and thine.

And in the practice of things like these, Christian Villager, thou wilt sweetly experience the truth of thy dear Master's saying, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."[1] The happiness which thou art ex-

[1] Acts xx. 35.

erting thyself, and denying thyself, to bestow on others, will *return in double measure to thy own bosom.* Thou art *sowing* mercies, and thou shalt *reap* mercies. "The blessing of him that was ready to perish" in distant lands, though it may never reach thy ear in this world, will be recorded in the books of heaven. And it shall be owned and published in the last great day. In that day of universal recompence thy Lord will acknowledge all thou hast ever done for Him. And though thine own heart will tell thee, that thou *hadst nothing which thou didst not first receive*,[1] that *it was His before it was thine;* and that, after all, thou didst but *give Him back his own;*[2] still, in the boundlessness of his grace and love, He will *reward* the least of thy poor services. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."[3]

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 7. [2] 1 Chron. xxix. 14. [3] Dan. xii. 3.

SOME LAST WORDS.

"HEAR INSTRUCTION AND BE WISE, AND REFUSE IT NOT."—PROV. VIII. 33.

"LET EVERY MAN BE SWIFT TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK, SLOW TO WRATH."—JAMES I. 19.

"WHOSO LOVETH INSTRUCTION LOVETH KNOWLEDGE: BUT HE THAT HATETH REPROOF IS BRUTISH."—PROV. XII. 1.

"REBUKE A WISE MAN AND HE WILL LOVE THEE."—PROV. IX. 8.

CHRISTIAN Villager! thou and I are now about to part; but, though we may, perhaps, be separate some distance from each other, I trust we shall both be going on still in the same road—the road that leads up to heaven. I would wish to take leave of thee with one parting word. It is this—Do not *quarrel with*, or be ready to *dispute about*, any duty which I have laid down, or any fault which I have exposed, just because thy own heart *condemns* thee under it. Do not, I pray thee, yield to any feeling of this sort,

however tempted to do so. Give each matter that quiet, serious, and upright consideration, which, before God, it demands. Consider, whether he who hath said these things to thee, hath not had *more opportunity*, and is, in many respects, *better qualified* for judging than thou art? Consider also, how solemnly *answerable* he is to Almighty God for all that he hath told thee, as a guide in religion. Consider, whether he would lightly peril the *peace*, and, perhaps, the *safety* of his own soul, by teaching thee things which are not true, or not needful, or not expedient? And lastly, if thou art wavering about any notion or practice which thy guide hath plainly condemned, but which thou art disposed to keep to, consider, which of the two is the *most likely* to be right in such a case—thou, who wilt naturally be led to *spare* or make *excuses* for thyself, and *indulge* thy own will; or he, who, besides the other advantages which have been named, hath nothing to gain or to lose by thy decision?

Christian Villager! take these my last words in good part. I have not spoken them without reason. The spirit of this generation is a *self-willed*, *heady*, *gainsaying*, *intractable* spirit; and there is a large body of *professors of religion*,

whose language and conduct are disgracefully and sinfully full of it. Be thou, as much as possible, unlike to them. The farther thou art from such a spirit as this, the nearer thou art to the spirit of the gospel. Christian *wisdom* is as an "apple of gold" that is beautifully set in the "silver picture" of Christian *meekness*.

Let it be thy single aim to know the *truth*, however it may *reprove* thee; and to walk in the truth, whatever it may *cost* thee. Pray for the constant direction of the Holy Spirit. *Wait diligently on the teaching of those who are duly ordained to minister the word of grace and wisdom.* This is putting thyself in the appointed way of knowledge, and thou wilt find it to be the way of safety.

And now fare thee well! Grace, mercy, and peace be with thee through the Lord Jesus Christ!

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